THE Hudson REVIEW

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The Inside and the Outside

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Interview with Peter Redgrove

GUY DAVENPORT:
Archilochos: Fireworks on the Grass

SONYA RUDIKOFF:
Psychoanalysis and Feminism

FREDERICK MORGAN:
Blue Hill Poems

Poems by STEPHEN JAMISON, GRACE SCHULMAN, PHYLLIS HOGE THOMPSON, HAROLD WITT.

Letter from England by ROBERT NYE.

Reviews by ROBERT S. CLARK, MARVIN MUDRICK, MAUREEN HOWARD, JOHN SIMON, STEPHEN FARBER, VERNON YOUNG, JOHN N. MORRIS, CALVIN BEDIENT.

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THE Hudson Review

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THE HUDSON REVIEW is pleased to announce that two contributors, B. H. Friedman ("Moving in Place," Winter 1974-75) and Eric A. Havelock ("The Aeneid and Its Translators," Autumn 1974) have been named winners of 1975 Fels Awards, in the categories of fiction and non-fiction prose, respectively. The awards program is a project of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines made possible through a grant from the Samuel S. Fels Fund. Writers were nominated for the awards by editors of noncommercial literary magazines; the nomination of writers was based on their first publication in a particular magazine during the calendar year 1974.

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Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors,

Wendell Berry's essay, "The Specialization of Poetry," is magnificent. I hope he develops further some of the deep points in it, and before too long. Let me ask a few questions at random, say a few things, ramble.

Whitman says that he wrote his poetry for "the average man." Why doesn't the average man read his work? What are the connections between values and music in poetry? Stevens says that poetry is "to help people live their lives." I believe it, but are people going to poetry for help? What are the connections between one's everyday life and conscience and values? I think about these things, but I'm unwilling to write about them just yet except to state them as questions.

But I want to say that I'm surprised Mr. Berry neglected to mention David Ignatow's work, the recent work of C. K. Williams, Gerald Stern, some of Richard Hugo's poems, even a few of Adrienne Rich's rather propagandistic and disturbingly flat poems; as examples of very important attempts to speak to *anybody* about the ordinary and yet shared experiences of our lives. Lately too I came across a group of translations of Nazim Hikmet's poems by Randy Blasing (Braziller will publish it in a while). One poem, "On Living," I'm convinced is a key to the poetry of the future, in which speaker and reader understand each other, are moved, and changed, and grow because the voice of the poem is so communal. America has nobody today who can write with such clarity and conscience. (The poem appeared in *APR*, in case anyone wants to read it.)

STEPHEN BERG

Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Editors,

. . . Wendell Berry's essay in the Spring issue was excellent; it was good to see someone finally saying what has to be said, and saying it with such poise . . .

RICHARD PEVEAR

York Harbor, Maine

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Dear Editors,

I herewith formally request that you run in your next issue a notice of correction in regard to the article by Professor P. L. Surette, "Having His Own Mind to Stand by Him," which appeared in your Winter 1974-75 issue, Vol. XXVII, No. 4. It should be noted that the quotes from the work of Ezra Pound in this article were taken from *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Copyright 1934, 1948, and © 1956 by Ezra Pound, and from *Personae*, Copyright 1926 by Ezra Pound, and were reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

ELSE ALBRECHT-CARRIÉ, Permissions Editor
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Dear Editors,

I have been appointed by the Shaw Estate as authorised biographer of George Bernard Shaw, and would like to hear from any readers who have letters or information that might be of use to me.

MICHAEL HOLROYD

c/o Robert Lescher
155 East 71st Street
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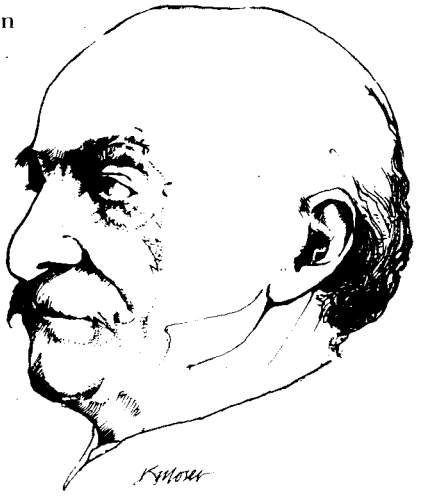

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Notes on Contributors

JEAN STAROBINSKI,* the eminent Swiss literary critic, is a Professor at the University of Geneva and the author of *The Invention of Liberty, 1700–1789* and *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle.* His most recent book, *Trois Fureurs*, is an analysis of the "Ajax" of Sophocles, the encounter of Jesus with the madman of Gadara, and Fuseli's painting, "The Nightmare."

GUY DAVENPORT is giving the Inaugural Lecture this autumn to open the Yale Center for the Study of Ezra Pound and His Contemporaries. A short story, "C. Musonius Rufus," will appear in an early issue of this magazine.

PHYLLIS HOGE THOMPSON* is a Professor of English at the University of Hawaii and the author of two books, *Artichoke and Other Poems* (U. of Hawaii, 1969) and *The Creation Frame* (U. of Illinois, 1973).

STEPHEN JAMISON attended Stanford University. The poems in this issue are from a work-in-progress entitled *Aron's Room.*

GRACE SCHULMAN has just received the Lucille J. Medwick Memorial Award given by P. E. N. for the range of her work in literature. Her poems, essays and translations have appeared in many magazines. She is Poetry Editor of *The Nation* and Director of The Poetry Center, 92nd Street YM-YWHA.

HAROLD WITT's most recent volume of poetry is *Surprised by Others at Fort Cronkhite* (Vagrom Chap Book No. 11).

JOHN SIMON's collection of theatre reviews, *Uneasy Stages*, has just been published by Random House. Many of these essays and reviews originally appeared in these pages.

SONYA RUDIKOFF's critical commentary appears in various journals. She formerly wrote art criticism for THE HUDSON REVIEW, *Arts*, and other magazines.

MAUREEN HOWARD's latest novel, *Before My Time*, was published earlier this year by Little-Brown.

(Continued on page 480)

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JEAN STAROBINSKI

The Inside and the Outside

1. *On Reasons for Examining the Ancients*

I DO NOT SHARE THE CONVICTION that truth inheres in the archaic word, that it behooves us to dig deep with the new exegetical tools we have at our disposal in order to unearth permanent secrets of the "human heart," of "human nature," of "being-in-the-world." Far from it. If the archaic word first articulated a system of representation—simpler, more vigorous than our own—it can, in my view, claim no privilege beyond that of having come first and of having intermittently set subsequent ages the task of keeping it in mind (consciously or unconsciously) by rote, by transposition, or by debate. Such etymological value as one may legitimately ascribe to the archaic word implies nothing but a derivational relationship: were one to recognize in it higher authority, one would have to admit, on principle, that anything articulated at the beginning has retained the utmost validity. What was uttered, imagined, narrated in the most remote temporal *depths* we can plumb does not, for all that, constitute the individual's most "basic" underpinnings.

And yet, the image of the past preserved *internally* is alluring, so much so that it still holds us in thrall. To justify it, we commonly borrow from biology the notion of phylogenetic inheritance, as did Freud, for example, in his theory of "primal scenes."[1] Myths and archetypes lay claim to the same status: their antecedence in the genetic order seems to assure them, perforce, a central position and function in the structural order, as though their belonging to the past of the species were credentials sufficient to make them the interiority (the *inside*) of the individual. The logic of this belief would have it that anyone who lends a pious ear to the archaic word thereby undertakes a voyage toward the inside, orienting himself

[1] A theory proposed by Freud in "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (The Wolf Man) but never developed. In a footnote, he explained: "This case history was written down shortly after the termination of the treatment, in the winter of 1914–15. At that time I was freshly under the impression of the twisted re-interpretations which C. G. Jung and Alfred Adler were endeavoring to give to the findings of psychoanalysis." (*Tr.*)

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toward some nuclear stronghold of his self where origins persist and endure. A seductive thought, one whose seductiveness is tied to a postulate for which we have no sound evidence, namely, the universal and pregnant character of the archaic word (or event). Deny it, and one is then at a loss to understand how one's inheritance could have devolved upon all individuals (usually we begin by presuming a temperament or disposition at work in each of our fellow men, then isolate, in the luxuriant undergrowth of Fable, its mythic prefigurations, those guarantors of its objective character and perennial life).

Making the most remote past coefficient to our most intimate depth is a way of refusing loss and separation, of preserving, in the crammed plenum we imagine history to be, every moment spent along the way. The very image of a "way" assumes that the past is productive and efficacious, its efficacity corroborated not only by the forward distance traveled, but by the traveller whose nature is fraught with the sum total of antecedent experience. To say that the individual constructed himself through his history is to say that the latter is cumulatively present in him and that even as it was elapsing, it was becoming internal structure. From this idea one cannot but draw an inference and its corollary, the inference being that self-knowledge is anamnesis or rememoration, and the corollary that anamnesis is the recognition of deep layers (often compared to geological strata) of the present-day person. When such a theory, far from limiting itself to the individual's history, redounds upon the entire history of the species in that of the person, it begets an extraordinarily reassuring system: there is nothing of the human past not mine, there is no word in the depths of time that does not concern and shed light upon me. Nothing is *outside,* nothing may be considered foreign (*Nihil humani* . . .). All history sets a mirror before us.

No sooner does one forsake the image of an evolution preserving the species than doubt arises—and is reinforced directly we replace the image of a global, unique history with the image of a plural history which defies comparison to an evolving organism.

There is no reason, however, why our interest in the cultural past should diminish if, instead of representing a part of ourselves, this past consisted in things other men have accomplished within a conceptual framework which is not and will never be ours, using a language in which we recognize nothing of ourselves. Leaving aside

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cultures which have not contributed to making us what we are, it is moot whether those other cultures which have indeed influenced us form a history of assimilation rather than the contrary—a history of successive evictions. The model proposed by Goldstein—a model which sets, over against the psychoanalytic notion of "repression-unconscious preservation," that of the positive emergence of "new structure formations"[2] warrants our viewing myth and the archaic word as a mode of expression which may, to be sure, reappear some day,[3] but which has meanwhile been supplanted by other kinds of discourse: its antecedence does not imply its hidden permanence. We have emerged from it, we observe it from the *outside*. The archaic word belongs to an elapsed moment: it is for us to gauge the distance separating us from it, the extent of our divergence from it, the difference on which our curiosity thrives.

Let us agree to acknowledge this: even if it should be the case that history were made of successive evictions, such interest as we bring to bear upon an object external, distant and different suffices to incorporate it in our present discourse, to make it ours, to internalize it, after a fashion. And even if it should be the case that our explorations of memory were explorations of a reality foreign to us, let us acknowledge that every anamnesis, every "archeology," by creating for us, outside us, a dimension of the past, marks the boundary of that "beyond-ourselves" without which we would be gutted of interiority. For if the notion of interiority makes sense, it must be conceived not as a receptacle of treasures, of monsters or of mysterious traces, but as a process—what we become by virtue of our ever changing relationships with the other, of our relationship with the *outside*, with that which we have never been, or with that which we have ceased to be.

Thus, in pondering the several archaic texts, alike biblical and homeric, which form the subject of my essay, I do not claim that their metaphors incubate truths that hold hard and fast for the present-day world. A close reading may, however, allow us to discern therein elements highly relevant to us. I prefer to consider

[2] *The Organism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

[3] The reappearance of an abandoned pattern of behavior is not, according to this theory, viewed as the *resurgence* of a "latent," "repressed" tendency, but as the individual's return to a more immature level of integration, a level where the mastery of objective reality is less marked.

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these texts, at first, testimony of a "naive" mode of thought which relies upon a fairly simple and obvious system of images whose implications it is for us to bring to light. I would like these texts to preserve their foreignness, their exteriority intact.

Why so many precautions? These texts treat of the opposition between words and thoughts, lips and heart, outside and inside. We shall understand them better if we keep alive the opposition between them and us.

2. An Homeric Image

Achilles, who refuses the offer Ulysses makes on behalf of Agamemnon, exclaims: "For hateful in my eyes, even as the gates of Hades, is that man that hideth one thing in his heart and sayeth another."[4] Here we have one of the first poetic documents in which the censure of duplicity is given full and emphatic voice. Such are the first words of the censorious thought: words blunt in the extreme. There is nothing more striking than the opposition between the thing *said* and the thing *hidden* in one's fastness (the Greek term defies exact translation: *eni phresin*). The "poetic" evocation of the gates of the realm of Hades, even if it is a bardic formula hyperbolically designating the most heinous thing imaginable, adds to the statement a singular analogical dimension.

Achilles' rebuke is aimed at the doubling, the splitting which causes *one thing* to be hidden and *another* said. The disjunction *heteron-allo*, where alterity declares itself, governs the construction of the statement. Alterity is something more concrete than the antithesis between said and unsaid. It takes on spatial dimensions: what goes unsaid is actively hidden in the heart, the space of the inside—the interior of the body is that place in which the cunning man dissimulates what he doesn't say. A simple image attributing a palpable, invisible, forbidden *place* to the silent *other*. Thoughts? Words? The neuter confers substantive equality upon the thing said and the thing hidden: for being thus opposed, they are of like essence. Their difference stems from the breach between the allegation and the act of hiding.

Here, meaning is elicited not by nominal adjectives, which remain buried in the generality of the neuter (elsewhere in Homer

[4] *Iliad*, IX, 312–313. With one slight revision, the translations of Homer used in this essay are A. T. Murray's (Loeb Classical Library).

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substantives can be quite specific: *epea,* words; *noos,* intention, thought, etc.), but by the opposition of the verbs: *to say-to hide.* What makes hiding feasible is a space of retreat, a lair, and the possibility of interposition. In the physical sense, the interior of the body constitutes this cache or lair: that is what *phrenes* denotes when its reference is to the physical organism (diaphragm, *praecordia*).[5] But the act of hiding a thought, a design, a speech, even in constituting the dimension of the unsaid, constitutes an "interiority," an abstract mental region superadded to the image of the carnal inside: thus, *phrenes* comes to acquire the further meaning of mind, intelligence, the "bottom of the heart." The image of hiding can expand because there exists, to begin with, an organic *inside;* conversely, it is because the act of hiding disjoins the said and the unsaid, then buries the unsaid in the corporeal space, that the secret place of intention, of unavowed thought, the dark seat of designs gets hollowed out. Interiority is the result of a *divorcing* action.

Achilles seeks justification for his defiance in the past. Behind generous promises made today lurk the appetite to possess and keep, the insatiable self-interest which his sovereign, Agamemnon, has always displayed toward him: "But he staying behind, even beside his swift ships, would take and apportion some small part but keep the most." The secret—hidden and retained in the "heart"—is nothing if not retention itself: the refusal to give, obstinate cupidity. None of the goods which Agamemnon promises through his proxy Ulysses has ever been delivered. Agamemnon will not change: Achilles is positive of that and henceforth consents no longer to believe him. "For utterly hath he deceived me and sinned against me; never again shall he beguile me with words." Achilles' rancor, his fierce obstinacy are those of an experienced man who knows beforehand that he will never get a thing. The grievance lasts indefinitely because (by Achilles' reckoning) the conduct of the "conductor of peoples" cannot change in the least. Only his speeches vary, and deceptively. Now we see the opposition between "to hide one thing in the heart" and "to say another" in bold relief: it concerns the substantiveness of the *gift.* Words merely enumerate treasure and dazzling privileges; nothing has been given, however. Nor will anything ever be given. Words will remain

[5] In this connection, see R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate,* Cambridge U. Press, 1954; in particular, pp. 13–44.

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the mockery of an offer; they are salt in the wound Agamemnon inflicted upon him in tearing away the graceful person of Briseis.

From the viewpoint of defiance, then, the mouther of eloquent promises hides an *inside,* a "depth" which is more than the thing *escaping observation,* more than the refusal to speak openly, but the very act of frustrating, the power in whose interest it is to cheat, not to accord each man his due.

The being that dissembles itself in the heart of others, behind fulsome shows, is defined, then, by a refusal to give. Such is the decision of the censorious thought: the interiority I confront filches what is by rights mine. It threatens my possessions; it hoards them. When the other's words are no longer taken at face value, the rhetoric of suspicion elaborates a double metaphor of evil, sundering the presumed adversary into two distinct "regions": outside, fraudulent words; inside, wicked heart. The modern denunciation of "ideologies" is much the same thing, rounding on deceitful speeches that mask personal advantage, private appetite, the refusal, once again, *to share.*

Homer's poetic comparison with "the gates of Hades" is admirably effective; reiterating and enlarging, it places the hidden in a space of cosmic dimensions, for the gates of Hades, that consummately odious object, not only mark the boundaries of a "beyond," a forbidden space, but define a stingy power that keeps evermore what it has claimed. It is the consummately retentive power. Barring others access to his heart, the man who dissimulates his secret desire and whose secret is his love of hoarding becomes an image of the nether world: in the eyes of suspicion, the hidden inside is a metaphor of the realm of the dead.

I have just said, "the hidden inside," but surely "duplicated exteriority" would be the more accurate term. The gates of Hades mark the frontier of the uttermost outside: they girt an ulterior space inaccessible to the man who fears and curses them. The *inside* they bar derives its meaning, for Achilles, from his vulnerability, from his potential humiliation, from the definitive absence of those it has relegated underground. The gates of Hades circumscribe man's irrevocably finite condition. Similarly circumscribing is that which the guileful man conceals in his heart: it is the place that rebuffs the glance eager to master its surroundings, it is a second outside which cannot be forced and whose essence, such as the wary mind imagines and fears it, resides in the will to surrender

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nothing—to impoverish me, to annul me. Let us venture a generalization: the *inside* which Achilles' censorious thought denounces is the space consisting of his possible setbacks, of his ever threatening dispossession, of his mortality: the power that reigns in that nether world is bent upon only one thing—exploiting his strength, making him waste it utterly without giving him in return a jot of material wealth or palpable pleasure. What the adversary hides in his inside is the destitution of Achilles' own inside.

3. A Biblical Image

The author of *Proverbs* tells the young man to beware:

> "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb,
> And her mouth is smoother than oil:
> But her end is bitter as wormwood,
> Sharp as a two-edged sword
> Her feet go down to death;
> Her steps take hold on hell." (V, 3-5)[6]

Proverb VII gives a long half-romanced illustration of this precept:

> "(. . .)
> With her much fair speech she caused him to yield,
> With the flattering of her lips she forced him. (VII, 21)
> (. . .)
> Yea, many strong men have been slain by her
> Her house is the way to hell,
> Going down to the chambers of death." (VII, 26-27)

The censorious thought is once again at work: it decries a rift. Outside, and in the earliest times, the altogether *external* smoothness of the lips and of words. Then, in keeping with the movement of feet, and *inside* the house, the pathway to death. It is the selfsame rift we have observed in Homer, but overtly sexualized. The lips of the foreigner promise pleasure:

> "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry,
> With carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.
> I have perfumed my bed
> With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

[6] See also *Proverbs* II, 16-19.

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> Come let us take our fill of love until the morning:
> Let us solace ourselves with loves." (VII, 16-18)

Here we have the description at once truthful and false of an interior wherein all desires would be fulfilled and all imaginable delights bestowed: the come-hither tossed at the passerby issues from an unexpected place, alongside the "straight path," that suddenly swings open to his body, beckoning his senses, but just as suddenly closes upon death. The love chamber becomes "the chambers of death." The censorious thought forebodes murder in carnal seduction, and a graveyard in the bed. Having descended from the serpent, the destructive woman ("she hath cast down many wounded," VII, 26) promises intoxication and yields her victim up to the "dart" that "strikes through his liver" (VII, 23). In the warning that father gives son ("My son, keep my words . . .", VII, 1) everything combines to accuse exteriority, alterity, the outside: an*other* world, *other* gods threaten the young man directly he heeds words uttered by a *foreigner* or stranger in the *night*. The beguiling interior toward which he hastens is in reality the duplicated outside whence no traveler returns. From the street, the first outside, the young fool hurled himself right out of life: such is the price he pays who "goes astray" (VII, 25), who forgets the cautions preached by the censorious thought. Certainly another lad who had "written" the teachings of his father "on the table of (his) heart" would not have come to the same sorry pass!

4. The Barrier of the Teeth, The Minding of the Lips

Once the danger has been decried, what can be done? How does one react to it?—by not listening to the deceitful voice, by defending oneself against the mendacious seduction, by keeping vigil over one's own life. . . .

Achilles' reaction is to turn down offers he judges fraudulent, to refuse to spend his own strength or risk his own life. Threatened, he huddles around the thing he doesn't want to lose. Thus, foiling the cupidity of his commander-in-chief, Achilles schemes to retain his most precious possession: his life. "For by harrying, many cattle he had and goodly sheep, and tripods by the winning and chestnut horses withal; but that the spirit of man should come again when once it hath passed the barrier of his teeth, neither harrying availeth nor winning." The prudent retention of life (or of the soul:

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psyche) is the project he formulates in answer to the deceptive voice that offers dazzling gifts and dissimulates obstinate avarice: a candid refusal counters a sly invitation. Holding one's breath, not letting it escape once and for all the barrier of one's teeth represents an elementary but fundamental form of self-control exercised at that verge where a personal inside and outside take shape. Endangered by the hidden scheme he beholds warily, the individual does sentinel duty at his own perimeter, he keeps watch over the barrier whose master he is and within which his life remains secure. But Achilles, though indeed he has resolved to abide inside his tent and has decided, for the nonce, to retain his life inside the barrier of teeth, proves incapable, when asserting his will, of containing his rage, or of tempering his high spirit. Ulysses did not fail to remind him of the paternal recommendation:

> "Good friend, surely it was to thee that thy father Peleus gave command on the day when he sent thee to Agamemnon forth from Phthia: 'My son, strength shall Athena and Hera give thee if they be so minded, but do thou curb thy proud spirit in thy breast, for gentle-mindedness is the better part' "

Wisdom—which is of *paternal* origin, let it be noted—favors government exercised not only over the precious substance of life (*psyche*), but over the transports of pride (*megaletora thumon*). "Retaining" (*ischein*) "in the breast" (*en stethessi*) may be viewed as the archetypal image of repression. Like "concealing in the heart," it is made possible by the reality of a visceral *inside* which can serve the individual as a receptacle of the "breath" he actively refuses to externalize: by preventing "the proud spirit" from finding a way out, the act that traps it squelches the organic interior (breast and entrails) so as to accommodate repressed speech therein: hence, in the willful economy that regulates, evaluates, doses the quantity of passion that may manifest itself outside, a form of wisdom comes into being and lays the basis for itself in an internal dimension, a subjectivity. This mastery, which Peleus urges upon Achilles, is neither illusory nor mendacious: it simply recommends that he curb passion, that he bridle it—it does not counsel putting other words in its place. It is the virtue called in French *retenue*—restraint, measure, discretion—and consists in humouring others, in delaying indefinitely the gesture or the word that might give offence. *Proverbs* offers advice along the same lines:

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"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin:
But he that refraineth his lips is wise." (X, 19)

"A fool's wrath is presently known:
But a prudent man covereth shame." (XII, 16)

"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue
Keepeth his soul from troubles." (XXI, 23)

We come across the same lesson wherever we look: the self-control exercised at the gates, the watch kept over the lips, the voluntary suppression that affirms (or creates) the virtue of prudence and safeguards "the soul." Was recourse to such venerable texts as these necessary? Folk wisdom, which includes the wisdom of the streets, is prodigal of the same advice: mum's the word, keep your trap shut. . . . *Loqui ignorabit, qui tacere nesciet* (Ausonius). *Qui garde bouche, si garde s'âme* ("The mouth is keeper of the soul") . . . *En close bouche n'entre mouche* ("A mouth tight sealed—the wise man's shield"). . . .

5. A Mytho-Biological Parenthesis

Philosophers and biologists alike have stated that an outside begins at the point where the expansion of a structuring force stops. One could just as rightly say that an inside comes into being the moment a form asserts itself by setting its own boundaries. A living organism exists only by virtue of the margin (dictated by the species, by the genetic code) through which it determines, defines and opposes itself, becoming individual: limit, finiteness, individuality, the struggle waged against the outside—all these are correlative. No inside is conceivable, therefore, without the complicity of an outside on which it relies. Complicity mixed with antagonism, for the unfriendly outside makes the membrane deploy in order to contain and to secure the constancy of the "internal milieu" against vicissitudes of the *Umwelt*. No outside would be conceivable without an inside fending it off, resisting it, "reacting" to it.

In between the outside and the inside, the contact surface—whether it be membrane, film, or skin—is alike the place of exchanges, of adjustments, of sensory signals, and the place of conflicts or wounds. Inter-dependencies are also transitions: my skin

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already belongs to the outside, but the horizon my eyes command, the space in which I move are mine, in a manner of speaking. The outside hems me in, but I appropriate my environment: air and nutrients enter me, but the body eliminates what it doesn't need.

In evoking the membrane, that sensitive frontier, I am merely reiterating the biological myth evoked by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle:* how can one not be seduced by that ideal point of departure—the *ball* of protoplasm? It's as if Freud had had it in mind to compose a variation on Bichet's famous and highly simplistic formula, "Life is the aggregate of functions that resist death," replacing it with "Life is the aggregate of functions that tend toward the death of the individual and oppose the destruction of the species." But the protoplasmic sphere and its continuous membrane are a schematic model that serves to express metapsychology in terms of biology. Freud was perfectly cognizant of the fact that multicellular organisms, during ontogenesis, rapidly outgrow the homogeneous membrane enveloping them: morula becomes gastrula, the sphere becomes hollow, then forms tubes, orifices, and so forth, so that exchanges with the outside are no longer conglomerately assigned to the entire surface: specialized organs manage different types of exchange with the outside, such as absorption, excretion, perception, and emission of signals. Another old myth detectable in Freud's work enters the picture here: this one has it that hominisation is the end-result not only of a process of ever more differentiated functional specialization but, above all, of an aptitude for ever more stringent self-regulation. Such regulation enforces its commands through inhibitory, interruptive mechanisms. Opposition between accomplishment and non-accomplishment, yes and no, would be unthinkable if not for the inhibitory aptitude dependent upon higher centers (of the nervous system). Only the animal endowed with a faculty of self-inhibition can devise codes and languages, and defer natural gestures in order to produce the tool, or the instrumental gesture. Now, the primordial foci of self-inhibition are the orificial organs; in the modulation of exchanges with the outside, "freedom" and "creative power" serve their apprenticeship. Bringing his attention to bear upon orality and sphincteral controls was one of Freud's strokes of genius. Attention can be further drawn to all those activities by means of which the individual shapes or modifies "physiological" relationships between inside and outside: glottal, lingual, labial ar-

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ticulations linked to the mechanism of inhaling and exhaling, dietary prohibitions, rites of purification, the cosmetic embellishment of lips and eyelids (those surfaces that border mobile and governable orifices), the extension of painting and tattooing over the body's superficies—all these variously define man's humanity. His want of "fleece," of natural "protection" makes him the being in whom commerce with the outside has become fragile, sensitized, arguing the need to exercise self-control. The striving for mastery will affect not only things incorporated and eliminated but any part of the body open to aggression by external agents—physical agents, or the eyes of the quick and of the dead. Paintings, masks, garments lend us a cryptic surface; the artificial skin they form helps defend the face and the body which, in our natural state, must suffer direct contact with the outside.

Let us recall a philosophical adage: man (the perfectible animal, the sick animal) is the only natural being who exists, in large measure, outside the natural order. He figures as the exception who must work to survive: between himself and the malignant outside, he must wedge his own activity, his technique. The proposition straightaway reverses itself: because man has come to acquire technique, he can brave the most inclement environments and colonize the outside. Thus, for having had to endure the condition of an *outcast,* man has won powers that make him the supreme *invader.*

The language of myth says it just as well. Paradise is that place where spontaneous harmony between man's body and external nature once prevailed. As a penalty for transgressing and for eating the forbidden fruit, his corporeal surface is "sensitized" ("they knew they were naked"). From that moment, in the awareness they have of their bodies' surface, Adam and Eve already stand outside Paradise. The guilt plighted upon the orificial act of eating spreads to all of human existence. Henceforth the introduction of food will be pain-ridden ("in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"). The orificial act of childbirth is also sentenced to an eternity of pain ("in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children"). Not only does man find himself expelled from the Garden, he learns that his life elapses *outside* the earth from which he has been drawn and into which fate will return him (Genesis III, 19). In short, the fall is not just a migration from the inside out but the fulcral moment that dooms man to perceive, in constant pain and awareness, the points of con-

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tact or of transition between the corporeal inside and the hazardous outside. Such control (at times obsessional) as he exercises over these points of transition is his principal means of assuaging the woe of exile. Cast out, he must scrutinize his relationship with a new environment, one he cannot trust: words utterable or unutterable, dietary prohibitions, circumcision, rites of purity, the text of the law affixed to the threshold of one's dwelling, the sabbatical interruption of work (in other words, of the active struggle with the outside) all reflect the importance in Judaism, of minding, by selective inhibition, what passes from the outside in, and from the inside out. . . .

Broaching the matter from a wider angle, let us consider paragons of human accomplishment; whatever the cultural variation, every such heroic image shares in common with every other the virtue of restraint which substitutes reasonable speech for violent acts, tactful silence for the imprudent word, and sometimes the cunning fiction for a dangerous truth: knowing when to talk, when to hold one's tongue, when to invent. He is fully human who can avail himself of the means best suited to the circumstance, whether it be violent action, speech, or silence. In every case, wisdom consists in stifling the irrational impulse, in not letting loose the word or gesture that would spell disaster by giving one's external enemy the upper hand.[7]

6. *Trial by Olive Tree*

> "What is inwardly is also found outwardly, and *vice-versa*. The appearance shows nothing that is not in the essence and in the essence there is nothing but what is manifested."
>
> —Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 139

Patrocles having died, Achilles can no longer contain himself. He leaves his tent recklessly and surrenders himself to martial rage knowing that he thus dooms himself (in accordance with the prophecy he has never forgotten) and that his glory will survive him. Unlimited squander has no future but its own end: Achilles will never know the happiness of returns.

The complete mastery of self, the perfect modulation of

[7] Hysteria and neurosis are the parody of this restraint. They substitute the avaricious retention of affect for the flexible mastery of exchanges. Inhibition, which determines an inside and an outside, becomes pathological directly the individual chooses to avoid confrontation with the outside, or no longer has the power to confront it.

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relationships with enemies and friends find their embodiment in Ulysses. As skilful at talking as at fighting, full of ingenious ruses, he mans the barrier of the teeth, safeguarding his soul and his words. When the occasion warrants it, he can employ wile to hide his violent intentions; above all, he is capable of repressing his anger, of calculating the right moment to strike. He therefore has at his disposal many means of action: *polymechanos* (whose approximate translation is "careful," "having a thousand resources") is one of his epithets. If he figures, in homiletic tradition, as the rational hero *par excellence,* that is so because he always knows how to choose, from among the resources that assure him mastery of speech, of tongue-minding and of fabulation, the one most appropriate to the occasion: simulation, dissimulation, candor, entreaties. The virtuosity with which he governs his words—now hiding his thought, now containing passion—qualifies him to brave the harshest outside. Whatever adventures and voyages the poet fancies, Ulysses' multiple powers prove equal to the multiplicity of his trials. Now his powers, on closer reflection, will be seen to consist, for the most part, in the act of discriminating at every turn between what one must store (inside, in the secret of the heart, in the breast) and what it is meet to surrender: concealing or openly admitting his desire to return, using an alias or his true name, inventing a past or giving a faithful account of events. Ulysses' mastery derives from his ability to appraise, while moving through an almost ubiquitously hostile world, the exact portion of himself that can be externalized: danger is everywhere so proximate, that one is safest without a handle for others to grasp—as No Man. And to test the intentions of other people, one is well advised to approach them in borrowed guise. Abetting this strategy of prudence, Athena changes her protege's appearances, even though, on at least one occasion, she is repaid in kind when Ulysses, failing to recognize her, relates a story made from whole cloth and speaks to her "contrary to the truth" (*Odyssey,* XIII, 250-331). It is therefore the danger everywhere present in foreign lands that provokes the will to sunder *outside* from *inside,* what *can* be said from what *must* be kept secret. At times prudence counsels against absorbing that which originates *outside.* Ulysses drinks Circe's philtre, but only after making it anodine with "the herb of life." The hero has a greater capacity than ordinary men for letting dangerous substances enter him because he knows which antidotes to take, or else because a god reveals them to him. Here

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again we see acquired mastery at work determining what may cross "the barrier of the teeth" or of the ears. Our interest in the hero grows keener when the narrator shows him more completely exposed to the outside, more apparently *open* to external danger, but also more ingenious, his wit at the ready.

In Eumaeus' house, Ulysses utters the phrase that was Achilles': "Hateful in my eyes as the gates of Hades,"[8] and, once again, this hatred is addressed to the mouther of lies:

> "For hateful in my eyes as the gates of Hades is that man,
> who, yielding to stress of poverty, tells a deceitful tale."
> (*Odyssey,* XIV, 156-157)

The words of indignant candor are echoed, almost ironically, by the man who delights in obliquity. They formulate a half-truth, an ambiguous statement, for even in disguising his identity beneath the beggar's skin and rags, Ulysses heralds as a certainty Ulysses' imminent arrival. He lies and speaks the truth at once, lying in order to make the heartfelt truth erupt, to find out if kith and kin have kept faith with him. Here we have a fine example of what seventeenth-century Italian moralists would call "honest dissimulation" (in the redoubtable labyrinth of court intrigue, one had to remain under cover until one knew for certain whether one was abetted or betrayed: every secret divulged was a flaw giving others purchase in one's self).

Nothing serves the bogus outside better than protestations of hatred for bogus outsides. As we see it, Ulysses represents the first example of the infinite facility of the word. There is nothing one cannot say, invent, or make believable. Fictional profusion, providing cover as it does for the fixed design in his heart, the wish to return, to come into his own again—house, wife, children—is his prerogative. The constancy of the *inside,* the unswerving ambition to lay hold of those central places—palace, throne, bed—excuse all external fabulation, the ruses that forestall enemies until such time as the true Ulysses may regain his hearth. Fantasy has free reign so long as the hero is detained *outside,* at a remove. His return signifies the end of Ulysses' shamming and, as a consequence, the end of the narrative that retraces the quest for lost possessions.

[8] This verse, which one might have suspected of being a formula for all occasions, oft repeated, occurs only twice in Homer.

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He who contrived to protect his abiding project by sowing fictions all along the way faces, at the end, the arduous task of proving his true name and rights. The fact that he was believed when he told lies, that he succeeded in making his mask plausible, constrains him, in order to win recognition of his true self, to furnish the most cogent proofs. Is pure deep-seated conviction, the nakedly subjective knowledge he has of his rescued identity enough to overcome Penelope's suspicions ("For always the heart in my breast was full of dread, lest some man should come and beguile me with his words," *Odyssey,* XXIII, 215-217)? How does one go about revealing the true being which has been concealed and protected by lies? Here the word alone no longer serves; "inner" certitude cannot manifest itself immediately in the declaration of the "I am."

The end of *The Odyssey* brings home this considerable lesson: it is outside, through the mediation of exteriority, that the hidden part, the dissimulated identity, can become manifest. To be sure, the beggar, at Eumaeus' house and with Athena's assistance, suddenly acquires a godlike countenance and, to the son who wants to welcome him as a god, Ulysses need say only, "I am thy father" (*Odyssey,* XVI, 188). In the palace, however, decisive *signs* must be adduced, palpable signs: the strength it takes to draw a bow, for example. But this sign is merely an index of strength—it doesn't prove the strength to be Ulysses', it doesn't guarantee *sameness,* vouchsafe identity, or establish beyond doubt a bond with the past. If Argos recognizes his master instinctively, the recognition is muffled inside animal excitement and comes to nought when the dog dies. Irrefutable proof, when given, will be furnished by lasting traces of past acts: traces branded in the body, traces graven into places and objects.

The "great scar": this "true sign" (*Sema ariphrades, Odyssey,* XXXI, 217) results from an old encounter with animal violence, with the boar's tusk. Identity, which deep-seated conviction no longer suffices to guarantee after twenty years' absence, is sealed by an external mark, the vestige of a "long gash in the flesh" (XIX, 450). For Penelope, however, Ulysses will not have done proving his titles until, goaded to it by a ruse, he relates the manner in which he himself built their conjugal bed:

> So she spoke, and made trial of her husband. But Ulysses, in a burst of anger, spoke to his true-hearted wife, and said: "Woman, truly this is a

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bitter word that thou hast spoken. Who has set my bed elsewhere? Hard would it be for one, though never so skilled, unless a god himself should come and easily by his will set it in another place. But of men there is no mortal that lives, be he ever so young and strong, who could easily pry it from its place, for a great token is wrought in the fashioned bed, and it was I that built it and none other. A bush of long-leafed olive was growing within the court, strong and vigorous, and in girth it was like a pillar. Round about this I built my chamber, till I had finished it, with close-set stones, and I roofed it over well, and added to it jointed doors, closefitting. Thereafter I cut away the leafy branches of the long-leafed olive, and, trimming the trunk from the root, I smoothed it around with the adze well and cunningly, and made it straight to the line, thus fashioning the bed-post; and I bored it all with the augur. Beginning with this I hewed out my bed, till I had finished it, inlaying it with gold and silver and ivory, and I stretched on it a thong of ox-hide, bright with purple. Thus do I declare to thee this token; but I know not, woman, whether my bedstead is still fast in its place, or whether by now some man has cut from beneath the olive stump, and set the bedstead elswhere."

So he spoke, and her knees were loosened where she sat, and her heart melted, as she knew the sure tokens which Ulysses told her. (XXIII, 181-206)

The word *sema,* "sign" or "token," reappears in this episode four times (XXIII, 188; 202; 206; 225): "a great token is wrought (*tetuktai*) in the fashioned bed (*en lechei asketo*)"—this would be the literal translation of verses 188–189. This token is known only to the spouses (and to a faithful domestic). It belongs to a private "code" used by the couple whose mutual recognition it assures. Thus, it is the permanence of the possession of the "code" that insures the permanence of Ulysses' identity. But what "significant," in the theological sense, is involved here?—an artifact wrought in former days by Ulysses with his own hands, unaided. Ulysses' words, describing the construction of a place and an object, have, as *bona fides,* the durable object, the bed, which, in the capacity of immutable "referent" Homer attributes to it, carries more evidential weight than the articulation of deep-seated certitude. The "I have made," together with the object made, are more probative than the "I am" would have been. Outside, in the room and bed he hewed, lies the proof of Ulysses' personal being, *confirmation* of his true essence.

Erich Auerbach, addressing himself to the homeric epic, laid special emphasis upon the beautiful, flat exteriority of the narrative development: ". . . externalized, uniformly illuminated

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phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground . . ."[9] In regard to the passage we are reading, one need add only this: the narration of external activity stands *in place of* (in the fullest sense of that term: it develops in space, it establishes itself in space) the expression of internal identity. This narration adduces the sufficient equivalent of it, for it proves sufficient to allay Penelope's lingering doubt. The individual having produced such strong marks outside, his *being* is effectively fulfilled therein and need not seek itself elsewhere.

No need to allegorize; it is quite enough to read the text, giving each term its full weight. In this case, our interpretation does not set out in quest of a hidden message; right before it, it has the *bare* account in which—from Penelope's viewpoint—the last shadow of Ulysses' incognito fades away. For the reader (or listener) who never doubted Ulysses' identity, it is—like the story of the wound and the scar—only one more hitherto unknown fragment of the past coming to light: everything stands revealed. What Ulysses must tell (and this represents his last trial) is the singular way in which he built the conjugal bed. His Return will then be "for good," the end clasping the beginning. Title to legitimate property, in the absence of written acts (of which Homeric literature is ignorant) inheres in the shared secret of that intimate labor through which room and bed came to be. "Deep-seated" identity therefore reveals itself through that sovereign means of exteriorization which is the laborious act, and the narrative recalling (still another exteriorization) of this old act abolishes the last obstacle to return; it assures the hero's reconquest of his plenipotentiary rights. Hegel is not our authority here, but the words and images themselves, the way they follow one another in the clear evidence of the Homeric epos.

If proofs of identity are conveyed in the account of an external act, let us note that the object of this external act is the construction of a material *interior*: well-joined doors, a roof that seals the nuptial chamber with "close-set stones." Ulysses fashions an enclosure within an enclosure; the image drawn here is that of a concentric structure, of a sealed place, of a protected *inside*.

The center of this place is marked by the olive tree—vertical, living at first, then transsubstantiated into carved material. It sprang

[9] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 11.

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forth (*ephu*) majestically long before the chamber was built; its very presence incited Ulysses to undertake his construction. The tree commands the space that toil organizes round about it. It is a natural "given," invigorated by the sap that brings forth leaves in profusion and endows the trunk with great girth and solidity. Having been stripped and hewn, it goes on plunging its roots into the earth: the vegetal energy it carried inside itself is transmitted, by a kind of metonymic continuity, to the bed ensconced within its wood. The "cultural"[10] work of decoration and luxury inheres in the massive natural presence. This rich piece of handiwork was made to stay put.

Doesn't the wood of the olive tree, anchored to earth by its roots, represent "external" nature in the *thalamos*? Does it not appear to us as the pure *outside* which the "cultural" act of building holds captive in the very center of its artifice? But we can invert the terms and say with equal veracity that the earth into which the roots plunge is a living inside that fosters the tree's growth; the unshakeable bond with the soil establishes a continuity allowing the primitive vegetal power, or *physis*, to subsist within the cultural handiwork. Having preserved the trunk of the olive tree, the faithful wife thus preserved the natural sign of the center, the reshaped bole that remains as ever it was. This makes her husband's return, and a revival of their former happiness, possible.

As we have seen, the relative position of inside and outside constantly shifts. When Ulysses strips the olive tree, squares it, and bores holes with an augur, it is from the outside that his work does violence to the tree's lovely natural presence. But in this case, violence is the application of a learned skill (Ulysses works *eu kai epistamenos*), man's inner aptitude developing through mastery exercised over the object—over the external raw material. And all this, related in the past, evoked like a distant outside, becomes the very core of the present tense of recognition. Now that a kind of vertigo blurs the edge between outside and inside, the moment of embrace can arrive: Penelope encircles Ulysses' neck with her arms.

[Translated by Frederick Brown]

[10] In French *"culture"* signifies cultivation of the soil, or tillage, as well as intellectual culture. (*Tr.*)

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GUY DAVENPORT

Archilochos

Epode: Fireworks on the Grass

(Composed around 650 BC, discovered by Anton Fackelmann on papyrus used for mummy wrapping, edited by R. Merkelbach and M. L. West in their *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 14*, 1974)

[ ]
—Back away from that, [she said]
and steady on [ ]

Wild and wayward pounding heart,
There is a girl who lives among us
Who watches you with foolish eyes,

A lovely, slender, graceful girl,
Just budding into supple line,
And you scare her and make her shy.

—O daughter of the highborn Amphimedo,
I replied, of the widely remembered
Amphimedo now in the rich earth dead,

There are, do you know, so many pleasures
For young men to choose from
Among the skills of the Delicious Goddess

It's green to think the holy one's the only.
When the shadows go black and quiet,
Let us, you and I alone, and the gods,

Sort these matters out. Fear nothing:
I shall be tame, I shall behave
And reach, if I reach, with a civil hand.

I shall climb the wall and come to the gate.
You'll not say no, Sweetheart, to this?
I shall come no farther than the garden grass.

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Neobulé I have forgotten, believe me, do.
Any man who wants her may have her.
Aiai! She's past her prime, ripening rotten.

The petals of her flower are all brown.
The grace that first she had is gone.
Don't you agree that she looks like a boy?

A woman like that would drive a man mad.
She should get herself a place as a scarecrow.
I'd as soon hump her [as kiss a goat's butt].

A source of joy I'd be to the neighbors
With such a woman as her for a wife!
Could I ever prefer her to you?

You, O innocent, true heart and bold.
Each of her faces is as sharp as the other,
Which way she's turning you never can guess.

She'd whelp like a luckless bitch
Were I to make get on her, throwing
Them blind, and all on the wrong day.

I said no more, but took her hand,
Laid her down in a thousand flowers,
And put a soft wool cloak around her.

I slid my arm under her neck
To still the fear in her eyes,
For she was trembling like a fawn,

Touched her hot breasts with light fingers,
Spraddled her neatly and pressed
Against her fine, hard, bared crotch.

I caressed the beauty of all her body
And came in a sudden white spurt
While I was stroking her hair.

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THE TONE OF THIS newly deciphered fragment of Archilochos would still be aesthetically difficult even if we were surer of the meaning. Our fortune in having it at all is immense and vies in importance with the utterly new dimension of lyric poetry which it gives to our tentative and sketchy knowledge of the dawn of European literature.

Archilochos is the first poet after Homer, and the first lyric poet of all who has survived in quotation and fragments enough to have an identity. A professional soldier and a bastard, he was born on the island of Paros in the seventh century BC. An engagement to marry one Neobulé was broken off by her father Lykambes for reasons unknown; several fragments allude to this breach of honor and a good deal of Archilochos' reputation as the Wasp of Paros derives from his satirical handling of the event.

He was one of a party that colonized Thasos, fought against the Thracians as a mercenary, and wrote a body of poems full of soldierly humor, masterly invective, and an erotic sense that parallels the vase paintings of the time. Eleven years ago I teased all the sense I could out of the existing fragments,[1] following Pound's Sappho fragment "Papyrus," with which he saw that broken things have an aesthetic all their own. The reviews were divided between outraged cries from Classicists who were not amused that I was trying to show how amusing Archilochos can be, and surprised people who had never heard of him who welcomed a long-lost lyrical master aboard the roomy ark of ghostly passengers that floats directionless across our deluge of unabating ignorance. Hugh Kenner, who provided an introduction to my Archilochos translation, began to brood on fragments and the survival of the past, eventually writing the astounding fourth chapter ("The Muse in Tatters") of *The Pound Era*. Resuscitations grow into renaissances.

We have this new fragment of Archilochos because scrap paper, in this case an edition of Archilochos, was used as mummy wrapping for those humble dead who were not rich enough to await Resurrection Day in linen and gold. Beginning in 1897, the archeologists began a work still going on at Behnesa in Egypt, known in the Alexandrian empire as Oxyrhynchos, which was once the administrative city of Nome XIX of Upper Egypt and is now one of the most interesting dump-heaps in the world. Copies of the New Testament have been found there, pages of Pindar, Sappho,

[1] *Carmina Archilochi: The Fragments of Archilochos* (University of California Press, 1964).

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Menander, letters, account books, enough torn and embalmed paper to keep the scholars busy for at least another century.

Unwrapping the mummies is a science all to itself. Anton Fackelmann, who spent years isolating and identifying this one, is the living master of the art. The text I have used is that of Merkelbach and West as further edited by Sir Denis Page in his *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis* (Oxford, 1974). The beginning of the poem is still lost. It takes up with the words "abstaining altogether" and an injunction to endure. A woman, or girl, is speaking. She then says, to Archilochos if he is, as usual with him, writing about himself, that someone in this very house has a hankering for him. Obviously, from the rest of the poem, the plot is this: Archilochos tells how, after the breaking of his engagement to Neobulé, he fell in love, with encouragement amounting to seduction, with a daughter of a woman named Amphimedo, a somebody.

He replies to her with an instant reflection that there are several ways of making love, mentioning a manner which he calls "the sacred necessity," or "the holy act," which lively folk might sidestep. What he means I do not know. We desperately need an archeology of the emotions to help us with these matters. To see them with modern eyes is to blind ourselves to reality as Archilochos assumed it.

It is probable that his intention "to climb the wall and come to the gate" is sexual innuendo; in which case his promising to "come no farther than the garden grass" would mean that he invites her to a session of going so far and no further.

Now comes the trouble with tone, for the next six stanzas are clearly comic—a kind of ritual cursing of the faithless Neobulé. We have many fragments like this: Archilochos sharp and exact with his insults. (Our fun here may be to realize that the "aging" Neobulé is 17, perhaps, whereas the girl being flattered would be 13.) Abruptly the poem becomes what a wag (as Peter Green reports in *The Times Literary Supplement* for March 14, 1975, page 272) has called "The Last Tango in Paros." There is nothing else in Greek literature like these last three stanzas. We can understand the robust bawdy of Aristophanes and Herodas, the vivid eroticism of Sappho and Anacreon, but these lines of Archilochos—they would have been sung on the lyre to audiences—are they comic, erotic, or "realistic"? I suspect some tone to which we are culturally blind.

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The first translation into English was by Peter Green (TLS, March 14, 1975). He goes for one tone, I for another; there will have to be a thorough consideration of the anthropology of the matter before we can solve the puzzle of aesthetics here.

Fackelmann also deciphered a second fragment of Archilochos for the Merkelback-West *Zeitschrift*, which turns out to be an expansion of a line already known as Archilochos'. Prof. Green takes it to be yet another elaborate insult to the faithless Neobulé. I am uncertain, but first read it as a comic address to his penis (a theme throughout Archilochos) that goes something like this:

> No more does this smooth flesh stand slant and bold
> Now that it's withered, and I am old.
> It quickens still at splendid eyes,
> But its seed sack's dry, and it will not rise.
> Cold winds and winter drive us on.

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FREDERICK MORGAN

Blue Hill Poems

1

The green men march along the ground
into the thickets without sound
then swarming forth, they march once more
where the cool grasses edge the shore.

Half-stillness . . . . and translucent mutter—
light skirmishings of wind and water—
in glimmering thousands at mid-day
blue Christs are striding on the bay.

2

We have acquaintances
up at the quarry:
a lettuce-green frog balances in the shaded corner
nose and eyes peering up from the shallows,
a water-boatman with scarlet head
glides along the watertop (he doesn't like my feet),
dragonflies in tandem hover and glisten,
a chipping sparrow rustles in the low laurel-bush
—there he goes with his *click click click*

as in the great midst we swim alone,
naked and serene.

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3

Do not wait for the owl to come out
before you play your games.

The owl sleeps in the tree all day,
at night he comes out to hunt and hoot.

He sleeps in the old weary pine-tree
but at night, his eyes are whirlpools

and when he flies over the house his shadow
carries the house with it above the pines

to a shining lonely place where calm eyes watch
in the moonlight—but our eyes are always closed.

4

At the tide-pool pocketed in broken granite
lives converge.
A gull skims over; flies hum
and circle, settle on the scummed salt surface.
I lie on the rocks as flat as I am able
eyes focussed on the small world
as a bee gleams by, lazingly.
Beneath, in sedimented green
a white-purple starfish curls,
his inner tendrils moving delicately,
and a crab size of my thumb
pale-green as a young apple
scuttles under green-brown seaweed
with a clean movement of legs.

The sun bakes my back,
granite edges dint my thighs,

I raise my head. Out and beyond

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the silly sailboats skimmer on the bay
(summer sailors at their Saturday races)
and the sun is high and gold and somewhere else,
somewhere where life is rare—
it's as though, in the deep day's expanded gaze,
you were extracted from the physical
into a realization beyond what you knew:

Who speaks to me of the Person in the sun—
in annihilation's blaze the one who sings?

Here, though, at my center of things
where the heat is intimate, intense
I'm pressed down hard into my own self-knowledge
and the world of private understandings:
no vision but one's own
as rock and weed endure
and the stubborn crab maintains a brief existence
becoming a part of self and self's perception
(time drawing still and holding
steady in this clear light).
"What is small survives," I speak the words
remembering how it all in time will end—
"what is small prevails."
I say it to the sun and to myself.

5

To Paula

The worm beneath the grass
tingles against moist roots,
the yellow-jacket drills
deep into pulpy fruit—
it is a pale gold day
with ripplings in the air:
I take your hand, dear girl—
at once, am everywhere.

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6

Nothing is better than sea-weed on rocks
and barnacles that scrape
and the harsh rub of granite
and the wind from the south bringing salt

except the sight of you naked,
everlasting love,
arms lifted, balancing lightly
as you enter the naked wave.

7

North Sedgwick

In the deep afternoon
August shade
at the edge of shimmering
asphalt, three
Indian children are sitting.

Micmacs from Canada
down for the
blueberries, they have brilliant
muskrat eyes,
inquiring feminine faces.

In a moment we have
driven past,
retaining though the imprint:
T-shirts' pale
lavender, deep blue dungarees.

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8

Eyes looked at me from the old stone wall
down among roots at the bay's edge.
I said, "Eyes—believe I am not here at all
but only a spirit passes by
and you can't see spirits or know what they are
beyond these quiverings of salty air
as you reach from your lurking-place of leaves and pebbles
across the granite ledge."

Time and place made no reply.
The eyes awaited no command.
There was nothing, perhaps, to understand
in all that glowing sun-drenched sky
and wave-sheet mirroring in to land.

Eyes looked on eyes, being self-imbued,
then those eyes faded and mine turning away
to distant borders of the resplendent day
released themselves from the doubled view,
diminishing to simple spheres
intelligent, contained—that would
describe the circle of an only world
bedazzling in its solitude:

and wave, and boat, and bird were silent
crystallizations of a mind
seeking the union known by sense
when senses give back from their strivings
into the brightness that is blind.

Eyes then denote a center of being
with radius of sense and comprehension
and what the being is, the eyes don't know,
unapt to turn back on themselves
or look behind. Being is known only
by being itself, in its own dimension—
yes, eyes are holes in the world's face, through which
    something else
does its own huge seeing.

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9

Cricket in the kitchen,
you hum a pleasing song
as I fix myself a pineapple and rum:

I may not care to see you
but I like your self-assertion.
To your health, then—little bird of the end of summer.

10

Oh, unapproachable One,
whom yet through this night of soft rain
I feel coolly stir at my heart,

through all my deaths and my lives
may I flow in your presence, and sing—
as I follow the shapes of my selves—
your glory, your peace, your abundance.

11

October in Maine. The human touch:
outboards, power saws, and guns.
A landscape fading into death endures
the idiot stutterings, fatalistically.

I listen and I think. Where might be
a true New England emptied of the human?
Forest, lake unswerving through their changes
old as the total earth, fresh as this dawn
and unwatched always but by one still man—
or man and woman, waiting quietly.

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PHYLLIS HOGE THOMPSON

Eurydice

1.
There are no trees under the earth.
Good roots go to pulp in the mud.
The rivers of Hell are sludge
Leaking down the red gash
I sank into when I came.
Something full of us lets go or is torn out
In the warm downpour that floods the declivity
And we are dead.

2.
I was Eurydice, witness.
The one song Orpheus told was mine.
If the trees attended, if the wind fell gentle to hear,
If the thunder over the lightened field withheld,
If the sea hung between tides and did not break,
If lion paced beside fawn and forgot his hunger,
If lovers turned from love's struggle to Orpheus,
It was his tireless telling they overheard.

Earlier than song or lyre
I was ear and listener.
Silence, converse of eyes was all,
Was need and answer, was mirror, was equal.
A long time breathing quietly.
Breath, the fragrance of other.
The sound in the mind that named the fragrance,
Then correspondent breath, tremor of air,
And in my ear the sound of his thought unwound
The first song of Orpheus.

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"Listen."
"I hear."
Heard, in the made hollow,
Himself, musing river,
Wooer and celebrant,
From whom fell the unrefusable music.
For the song, becoming itself, forgot end and origin,
And rose in him without need.
The wind became his motive. The leaves roused.
The trees spread their branches wide to carry his song,
And one bent and became his armed lyre.

Fables of self, streaming in the warm auricle,
Were borne down inner circles, unlaboring,
And burst on the drum
Unchanged,
Pitched purely into the standing air between us,
Heard purely in the absolutely passive body,
The ear of love.

But when, as he willed, I touched him,
He closed my hands in his hands, stopped the lyre.
He tasted self in my mouth, and the song stopped.

3.
In the dry heat of the dog star,
Though the torch of Hymen choked and spit pitch
As it led him to me,
On the other side of the portal
We clasped in our own hands
The truth
Lovelier than every imagined thing,
Harder, happier,
Fact, that perfectly gathers to itself light,
Hymen O Hymenaeon
And Orpheus at peace.
Silent.

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As Hell is, till he comes.
As the green world was, till he sang.

4.
No serpent killed me.
Nothing that lives would hurt what Orpheus loved.
I walked to the thirsty river.
I lay down in the bed.
I killed myself.
In heavy rain
I came here to Hell.

5.
Then to the shaping lyre the trees rose up.
O Orpheus singing! O the tall trees of song!
And all creatures were hushed within themselves,
Listening.

6.
This way will come Orpheus.
Death will admit him through the soft veins of Hell
For the horned lyre, light lifted among shades.
Within themselves the dead will hear his music, and
A tree will rise in Hell.

Then, like no other
Singing
Though he eat with the dead
He will go back
And I will go with him to the portal
Of death's winding ear, where I will listen
As his song reaches into the tender air forever
Living, lucent in the streaming Hebrus, warm
Under the world,
His lyre as stars risen.

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After Many Words, a Long Time

Shades lapse somewhere near me,
Near the bed.
Be mild with me.
Light slips in my loosened clothes.
Quietly as they fall, they fall,
I am shaking.
I raise my hands to my face so I will not see
You, when you come to me.
I thought—
Before this hour broke over us, descrying
Love's animal and shy body—
I thought myself wholly disclosed,
Because we had for so long spoken the truth
With one another,
And words given are more than kisses, I thought.

But now I think you will touch me.
Yes, as you take light hold of my wrists
And lift my hands. With what unspeakable care!
Facing your eyes, I see promises.
And who can say what will come of this?

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STEPHEN JAMISON

Ward B: The Saturday Nights

Chocolate glittering
the teenagers walking
in red robes
holding pieces of cake
and the lamp light
shining in the window.

Aron sees it all
the brightened hair
of the girls
in the lamp glow
the midnight darkness
through the window.

It is Saturday,
trees faintly visible
on this night
which began with frost.
All the weekdays

were spent dreaming
of nothing,
spent waiting
for the one long night
when the teenagers
could stay up late.

This is the night
they thought they saw,
Aron's night
sitting before his window
all week
waiting for Sunday.

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With frosted noses
the creatures gather
in the yard,
small plastic toys
sit in the frosting
of the cake,

and the night
is colder than Aron
remembers. Every night
is this night,

the slow evening chills
climbing from
the frosted light to him;
the day the children
thought they saw
and the man they thought

they saw
when there was nothing
to do but sleep.
Then there were only stars
doing nothing,
the stillness of darkness,

and there was nothing
to dream—
only another day.
And on this other day
Aron moved in his sleep
towards the window

and blessed all creatures,
he moved once more toward
morning that has never been.
With their flung ribbons
and lipstick

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they saw him talking
to all the creatures
who wait for the one day
the children are true,
when the cake
the whole night
can be anything they wish.

The man walks
down the ward
toward them now,
girls with cigarettes
sitting
around cards on the floor,
their hair shaken
from their shoulders.

He goes into his room;
he thinks of wheat germ oil
for his heart
that he had seen pictured
on the colored pages
of a magazine.

Each day flutters
in his heart
asking for nothing,
each weekday plain
and stubborn
waiting to be named.

Saturday's life
will be sleeping
when Sunday comes,
the evening before
the Sabbath
and the day of the King.

The light will walk
in the evening

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of its day
and of all things
that do not see him,
seated in his chair
in his room
with his magazine,
chanting the unknown name.

The Morning Thirst

It is early.
Going toward
the fountain
he sees lights
in small
red pools
on the carpet.

Since three a.m.
he has been awake.
He saw the late summer
darkness
and said prayers
and thought of his wife
and the lord
and things that were warm
in him.

He ran his hand
down his shins,
the lame bones
which had been
frozen on a walk
to the grocery
forty years before.

The lame legs
said his prayers

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for him, keeping
him still
till he got thirsty.
Then he walked down
the hall holding the rail.
Everywhere the dim lights
made red pools

in the floor
like when the sun
came up.
He sat in
the lounge by the fountain
where the nurses
couldn't see him.

The first red light
was starting up
in the spiked grass.
It came up from the earth first,
spreading over everything,
it held each frozen drop
and then let it go slowly
into a golden crown.

Beyond the lounge
each blade of grass
stood in its circle of light,
the snapdragons
leaned for the night water.

Soon now they would
give him a blue pill,
like a star
on his dark palm
to wash away
with water from a paper cup.

The water in the grass
would fill the one

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little cup, washing
away stars
his hands held
long after they
had gone from
the sky.

But when he said,
Now I lay me
down to sleep—
then he felt
his lame bones
hold him there
to sleep like
the rest of creation
asleep in crystals
or drops of water.

The sun edged
into the garden
until light rayed
lavender from
the shoulders of flowers
with their spirit

and awakening.
This was his life,
coming awake
to the morning thirst,
his lame bones
coming into the
crowns of light
spreading down the room;
it was all he knew,

the morning was
shadow, the cool
porcelain basin
and then the birds
who were never thirsty

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till midday
flying in the morning
shadow like spirits.

The spirit world
did not need itself
till the high sun,
concentrating now
on hearing him,
and on awakening,
on cradling the head
of every leaf in song,
in water, and light.

A Crown

I lay in the ward room
and recalled seven years ago
the hamburger shop
where a man
took off his hat
weeping,
his head sliding
on his shoulders,
and begged to be
treated like a child,
to have his head rubbed.

I left that day
with the certain terror
of the ten year old
blue suit and hat
on him,
years that had forgotten
they clothed him

while the heads
of trees took on
new crowns.
That world clothed

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in sun lay outside
the window now,
and Aron my roommate
in the dark chair
over his Bible.

The skull of the moon
would ride up
polished and alone
as a new stone.
The cap of Aron's
skull carried not a hair
to be brushed down
or touched.

The light could
rest there,
the hands lift
in the window
to another life
that stood beside him
like his own.

And I was with him,
with the smooth light
soap still in my hair
from the bath.
I could be his brother
bending to him
and sleeping near him.

The trees
gave their light
into the room
becoming a book
and a prayer
a shaved head
and a soapy one holding
their lights alone.

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The children
climb up
the smooth berries,
the small buttons
that hold them,
then manhood
its one wild thorn held up;

And all things then
taking the violet light,
the iron that pours
trees back at dark,
taking on the dark book,
the prayers.
Prayers said for brothers,
that also had
their beginning

hidden in rushes
spiking the earth at dark.

Prayers said
for Jack the boxer
with his great frozen
hands in his lap,
filings of hair clinging
on the proud head
and on the back of his hands.

And for Johnny
the child at his clay wheel
in the therapy room,
making small bowls,
the smell of sand
on his hands,

and I saw Aron
bowing toward the trees
that can take on their
crowns alone

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and praying for us
because we wore ours
alone and in sleep.
I saw him at
the window,
each sound of his
prayer dropping

as if from a bare crown,
a head-dress no one
can ever see
except as a purple
shadow in a thicket
of leaves,
or a hidden stone.
It is a child's

a bowl on a potter's wheel
ringed with precious
birds
the crown he can hold
briefly and believe it
his own.

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JED RASULA AND MIKE ERWIN

Interview with Peter Redgrove

ERWIN: In many of your poems, I suppose in your more automatic surreal poems in *The Hermaphrodite Album,* there are very rapid shifts of image and metaphor and something verging through the poem; and I wonder if you have a sort of built-in sense of limitation about the repetitions and mutations of your energies and the metaphors you work with? What are the bounds of surrealism in your poetry?

REDGROVE: Well, there isn't any surrealistic content. I mean, I don't understand what you mean by surrealistic content anyway. None of those poems are, in the sense of arbitrariness or of desire to shock, surrealistic. They're surrealistic in the sense that they explore a world whose boundaries shift and change and transform. And they're surrealistic in the sense that they draw on this kind of dream-like life, or a world in which the limitations *are* only subjective. But I think we need another word than surrealistic for this. I myself would prefer some word which had a notion of eroticism in it. Because those poems are really quite straightforward if you take the notion that in an erotic state of mind you are living in a state somewhere between dream and waking, where the imagination becomes literally true. This is the theme of *In the Country of the Skin*, too. Obviously within this world certain personages and events recur. In *In the Country of the Skin* this black woman and the death and the recovery of a child who is the man himself, this kind of process is an archetypal one. This is Isis re-growing her child, or the child of the black Sophia. These things, however, were discovered post-facto. This is an experience. The poems are supposed to be experienced, I would say, as in a light trance. That is to say in a trance of concentration. I like to use the Chinese or Japanese notion of mirror-mind for this. Or the Zen notion, though I got it from Judo where one is supposed to have mirror-mind as well. Nothing is held onto; things change. "Surrealistic" is the wrong notion, I think. I would say "pentecostal" if it didn't seem to recommend the worst. But perhaps in the existing categories "symbolist" is a better one.

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ERWIN: In that world of symbolism do you have a sense of limitation as to where you would stop the suggestiveness or something like it in your poem?

REDGROVE: This would depend on my audience. *The Hermaphrodite Album* itself is written between us, to each other, in the attempt to recreate an erotic atmosphere which is also an intellectual one. The sense of limitation in that is I discovered that many people do not live in an erotic way. So many people seem to live in their heads. That's why the book is called *In the Country of the Skin*, because it's living in the skin. Limitation—no. The kind of activity in this world leads toward a transformation, a change, and new vistas of consciousness. There is the point where one falls back from this kind of state of mind, this incredibly capacious and sensitive state of mind. One falls back from this from time to time. And this is subject-matter of course. So in that sense limitation. There's also limitation in the sense of formal boundaries—well, yes, the vessel changes. The vessel changes. For instance, in *The Hermaphrodite Album* I think of the way it's become more formal and incantatory later on in the book, more patterned. Why this should be I don't know, except for increasing confidence, since the poems are more or less arranged in chronological order. What happens in that book is that the two kinds of poems, which are our own,Penelope's poems and my sorts of poems—at the beginning you can tell them apart, you know, each of our work. As you go on in the book it's not so easy to tell because they fuse and change, and then people make mistakes about who did what, you see. This is the point of the book, really. It's to say we have our own particular talents, and we're interchanging them and learning them. And I would hope in reading the book one gets this sensation. Few of the poems are overtly love poems. But the book itself, as one reads it, is about mingling and the exchange of abilities. Which is, you know, love in practice rather than love stated and depicted. So the word limitation is manifold, isn't it; there are four or five implications there. I think it's quite true to say we are intent on becoming each other. I'm quite sure I'd rather be her than myself. And I think she'd rather be me than herself. So we exchange in this way. But this is quite normal, isn't it, in any love affair. And it *looks* surrealistic because I suppose the surrealists were highly erotic men.

ERWIN: What about the shift in your work in the last few books,

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more markedly from *The Force*, into this more pentecostal, if you like, world, this more exploratory world of the unconscious. Was this fairly deliberate on your part, or was it gradual?

REDGROVE: Obviously it was a delightful gift. My first marriage wasn't very happy. Neither were the jobs I had to do for a living. I was in an office and so on and I believed that one *should* go to an office and earn one's living in this way and wear suits, etcetera. And I was lucky enough to get a three-year fellowship at Leeds, which required of me nothing except that I should do my own writing. And a great deal of unnecessary and obsessional formalism began to disappear at this point. Because, you know, I'd been taken on my own abilities, as it were, or my own interests, rather than doing somebody else's job for them in an office hierarchy. And I think this produced in *The Force* a relaxation in subject-matter, because it allowed me more time for contemplation. I mean, I could work all day if I wanted to, instead of working as I did in office jobs: I used to get up at five-thirty in the morning in order to work, you see, before going to the office. Spent some time on benzedrine doing that. This was about fifteen or so years ago. And then recently my marriage broke up. This is an English middle-class story. English middle-class men of my generation are rather liable to marry the first women they sleep with, do you see. I was born in 1932 and I would have come to sexual awareness just shortly after the war. Very austere time, when tribal values were paramount, really, because you couldn't allow the healing energies which were trying to put England together to leak at all. So there was no question of any kind of permissiveness. So the influences brought to bear on the young people were really very very strong, particularly in this English middle-class sort of thing. So if you slept with a woman you would probably want to marry her, and I did. I was faithful to her for thirteen years. When I got out of the office jobs and the nine to twelve sort of thing, which was part of the tribal values (one's woman expected one to work in this fashion, whatever it did to one), with the Leeds thing all sorts of other powers and interests started to arrive. Including the inevitable love-affair, which separated me from those tribal values, since they represented—this love affair—the things which my marriage had left out. My wife was quite forgiving about this, do you see, but she really wanted to return to the old state. And so did I, I think. But this was impossible and the thing got wilder and wilder and I started being seventeen

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instead of whatever I was—thirty-six, something like that—and slept with a great many people, which she got fed up with so she went off. On the other hand, you see, this liberated very many perceptions which had been trained into these middle-class shapes. So it's a little piece of social history which, I'm very interested to discover, is matched for instance by a lot of the lives of my colleagues here at the art school, who are artists, who made similar kinds of marriages, had similar kinds of trouble about the same age. I think you find this generally among middle-class people who have become artists in England.

ERWIN: Also I'd like to ask you what kind of lasting effects you feel were made on your work by the insulin-shock comas?

REDGROVE: Well, this is a very strange business. It's entirely double. As Empson says, "ambiguous gifts as what the gods give must be". Well, the exact equivalent is an acid trip, I think. You see, we didn't have LSD at that time, there was no LSD at all. There was no hash, no pot either, for that I had to go to Spain later on. I used to get a great deal of psychedelic adventure on liquor. Then I went into the army, I had this experience, and I was a very obsessionally tidy sort of person. The army was obviously too much, so I said I'd lost my memory, in order to get out of it. But I started telling the psychiatrist some of the things that had happened to me, which were no more than the distortions of ingrown virginity. And a doctor said, "I can't quite understand you, you must be schizophrenic or you must have incipient schizophrenia. Therefore we'll try on you this new treatment, insulin shock." I said, oh I don't care, if I get out. It was only very much later I realized how barbarous it was. Because they draw all the sugar out of your blood till you go into convulsions and then into a coma; then they bring you back again. Nobody knows why this works for schizophrenics, whoever they are. There's no diagnostic category of incipient schizophrenia. Nowadays they give you drugs instead, which is much more beastly, I think, really. It was quite unnecessary in my case. I mean, I meet students every day who suffered from little obsessional fears like I had. And they gave me this thing. And the myth of it is that you die and are reborn. And that's exactly what happened. I remember being taken to pieces and put together again. And subsequently I've learned that some such experience, when it happens to people, often liberates great tracts of their lives. When I

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started writing poetry, for what reason I don't know . . . Oh yes, that was erotic too! The first time it happened was the first time I slept with the girl who became my wife. There was a great peace in my head and into it came the lines of a poem. So that was the first poem. When I was doing this, starting to write poetry, I thought to myself, "Who am I, with my middle-class background and no experience of life or anything, to be writing poetry?" And then I said to myself, "But I've been dead fifty times. I have something to say." And, of course, later on one learns that many kinds of artists, adventurers of the mind, have had this sort of experience. Up there's the book on Shamanism by Eliade: the shaman always suffers an initiation of this kind. Graham Greene talks about his Russian roulette. I'm not comparing myself to these people. Herman Melville had this experience of falling on the deck, but the ship keeled over and he went in the water instead; but he saw the grain of the wood. And it was a reprieve made Dostoyevsky go out "queer and clear" I think Empson says. And younger people nowadays, if they don't find a death and rebirth out of their family situation or out of their adolescence threshold (society doesn't provide thresholds for us), they cut their wrists or go on an acid trip or many acid trips. They will have a time of such exploration. And this happened to me quite inadvertantly, you know, without my seeking. And it gave me a root in a kind of experience which was both of death and erotic in nature. So it had, I think, an important effect. But I still think it was a barbarous thing to do to a young man of eighteen.

RASULA: There's an interesting level of anthropomorphism, I think, in *In the Country of the Skin*, which is suggestive to me of the organic nature of poetry and language. One of the passages is a description of crabs:

> They mate, with the sound of typewriters. The tide is returning, they retreat to their caves. They have written their page on the sand, as a pack of cards writes its game on the baize table. The tide is coming like hands to gather up the writing.

And in another passage a description of a tree, where you say:

> A tree throws down its library of books every autumn, it throws out all these books, and it grows new ones. A tree takes off its brain, throws it to the ground. It shatters. A new brain grows.

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And in both cases there is an element of ritual, possibly, which I think is related to human activity. And I wonder if I'd be correct in thinking that you see poetry as having an actual organic relation to other creative forces and cycles?

REDGROVE: Certainly. You're absolutely right. I do. It's the signature of all things, isn't it? I mean, this is God's handwriting or nature's handwriting that you read. What you write in a book is only one variety of organic growth, organic life. Poetry, insofar as it has to do with visionary matters as opposed to (well, I don't think it *can* be opposed to social matters), but directly in visionary matters, the visions are visions of matter. I'm a materialist, you see, but I'm a materialist in the Hindu tradition, which regards matter as a song. This is not so far from contemporary physics, of course. What we're made of is a complex vibration. Poetry does vibrate, it is a pattern of vibrations. I say I'm a materialist: for instance, I have great sympathy with the French neurophysiologists who maintain that dreams are a replay of the genetic code. I find the conceptual link between mind and matter a very easy one. I find no division between mind and body; I am not a Cartesian man. I find that it is very easy to think of matter as being conscious on a molecular level. All sorts of things come from this. It's to do with being originally trained as a scientist, I think. It's this notion that, for instance, you hold a golf ball in your hand: now, the relation in size between this golf ball and the earth is the same as that between the ball and a molecule in your body. In other words, your body is a world. How do the inhabitants of this world communicate with the *anima mundi* which you call your personality? Of course, they communicate by means of dreams and visions. There's a very strange experiment which I've written about in the new novel. *The Terrors of Doctor Treviles*, and which is completely authenticated and absolutely respectable. And it has to do with warts. Warts are a variety of benign cancer, of course, and probably a combination of allergic and viral disease, and there have always been legends about warts that they could be charmed away. You know, you could go to the chemist and have your name put in the wart book and they would disappear, you would pay a penny. And there are wart charmers here in Cornwall. My colleague here, Lionel Miskin, has taken his family to a wart charmer and the warts went—mind you, they came back again, but they went. And there is this man, this doctor, called Stephen Black; and I read this, many years ago when I used

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to work in the offices, in the *Lancet*. It was part of my job to read the medical journals. And what he did was to get a considerable number of very warty patients in one hospital, and experiments properly supervised by doctors and nurses and so on. And some people have warts so badly that they're in agony from it, they can't move in their clothes without these things turning over on their skin. And he got a good deep-trance hypnotist there, and in full view of all these doctors and nurses he had the hypnotist say to the patients (perfectly controlled experiment), "The warts on the left hand side of your body will disappear and the ones on the right will remain." Lo and behold it happened. Properly supervised; it was written up in the *Lancet*, and there is nothing more respectable. The implications of this experiment are enormous. Later on he wrote a book called *Mind and Body* in which he explored these implications. What it amounts to is that the voice changes molecular structure; the voice, in trance, communicates down to the molecular level. Thus, the shapes of the proteins, which have to do with the antigen manufacture, which fit together like keys and locks, were altered by the voice of the hypnotist. Or by the body of the subject responding to the voice of the hypnotist. Therefore there is in certain states of mind—visionary states of mind—a communication between what you call the mesocosm, the size-scale of things we inhabit, and the scale of the very very small. This links up in a gratifying manner with Ouspensky's notion that when we look for God we look for Him in the wrong place. We look for him in the heavens—well, he's there as everywhere else. But where we should look for him is in the very small. It's in one of his discussions about further dimensions, one of his fourth dimension/fifth dimension discussions. He says that the freedom of other dimensions is at the level of the very very small. There is a paper by J.B.S. Haldane which I had the pleasure of bringing to the attention of Arthur Koestler (after reading his book *Roots of Coincidence*) in which Haldane maintains that the brain has its ability for apparent decision of free will as sub-atomic particles seem to in a sense, because it is a magnifier of quantal events. We've got a very marvellous continuum here. Koestler's own book *The Roots of Coincidence*, of course, was about the strange similarity between the science of ESP and psychic research and the science of sub-atomic physics. He didn't make the conceptual connection between the two, that in fact the scientists and the investigators were talking about the same worlds. But he might very well have done. I wrote to him about it and he

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said yes. Do you see how this means that when we are in a visionary state we are seeing the world? The shaman is not a man who doubts (this is a mistake made in later Greek thought), is not a man who separates his mind from his body and goes into the universe and flies away like an angel, as Blake knew very well. He's not that sort of man at all. He's a man that goes *into* the universe of his body, and in the universe of the body all the forces that make us are compiled. That is, we are a focus of many many forces in the world. So if we investigate ourselves, we investigate the world. So I'm a materialist. I can't remember your question (*laughing*).

RASULA: Well, that comes around to it in an interesting way. Do you think that poetry is a necessary focussing on the life of bodies and the components, the forces, that are centered there?

REDGROVE: Poetry is life talking to itself in its own language. Said Novalis.

RASULA: Yes, that's in *In the Country of the Skin.*

REDGROVE: I think Novalis originally said it. But I certainly said it in *In the Country of the Skin.* This notion, incidentally, is in a very respectable tradition. You can read Wordsworth, you can read Shakespeare (*Midsummer Night's Dream*), you can read Rilke, you can read Novalis, I think Hölderlin, all in this tradition. There's a book which was a revelation to me when I read it after writing *In the Country of the Skin,* called *The Orphic Voice,* by Elizabeth Sewell. She talks about a line of poets, inherent in whose beliefs is that poetry is not mere ornamentation but is actually *about* something which is important to us and actually can affect not only the way we think, the way we feel, but the way we grow, and the way that things grow around us. Magic, in other words. For some reason Christianity doesn't like this sort of thing. Of course, Christianity *has* to separate itself from the world in order to bring about the rise of technology, for whatever purpose that was; personally I think it was to invent organic chemistry and thereby contrive the birth pill, which renders women independent creatures and their own mistresses instead of chattels of men. I could be wrong about this (*laughing*). Christianity, which is a male-oriented religion with a triple male in the sky, was perhaps invented by women in order that the birth pill

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might be discovered. And now, if that's true, we've got the birth pill: we don't need Christianity.

RASULA: On the dust-jacket of *In the Country of the Skin* there's mention of a hope that your work might lead other people as well as yourself into what you call "a neurosis-free world." Do you feel this as a driving impulse behind the writing of your work or more as a hope for what you've already finished?

REDGROVE: Well, I think poetry ought to have a healing function. I can't really hope that mine could do what I want in this respect, but it looks in this direction. I would think that somebody who had gone through the experience of *In the Country of the Skin* would have gone through what I went through in writing it, which was a very healing process. It's as simple as that. One goes through these things and one doesn't see them at a distance, one participates in them if it's a good book—if it's a strange book and a good book as well, which really draws you into it, it should have something of the same effect as the events it describes. Which for me were a transforming experience. I have, you see, through the years—partly through the practice of poetry and partly by the study of psychology—lost a lot of neuroses, I mean, lost a lot of quite gross clinical troubles. I had these two years of study with this old gentleman John Layard, which were extraordinarily revealing to me and liberating. And I believe that a lot of the baggage and hang-ups that people carry around with them *are* in fact dispensable. It's simply a matter of inhibition: there's something which is standing between them and their proper natures. I'm reminded of Eliot's remark in this respect. He said inspiration is not something which descends on you, he says it is more like an inhibition to inspiration being taken away; it's more like something being taken away which interferes with the proper state of your mind which *is* inspiration. The proper state of mind is inspiration. And having lived in a state of ecstasy in writing that book—not *by* writing it, but living in a state of ecstasy *and* being a writer writing about it for this quite extended time—in a state of continued inspiration which, in my case, may be of a fairly archaic kind, but is open-ended—I believe that this state is available to people. It's a state in which the mind is *not* separated from the body; it's a state in fact of being in love with the world without ignoring anything about it. Many of the psychedelics give

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accounts of this sort of world. I think it's one's birthright, I think this is mankind's birthright. And what we call neurosis is the impediment to existence in this state. And of course neuroses can be external as well as internal—they can be social neuroses. They can be social habits which are unexplored abuses, doors in the mind which shut off avenues of exploration, because growth is painful.

RASULA: There's something quite related to that from *In the Country of the Skin* that I'd like to read and ask you about. You say there that:

> Poetry is the calculus of growth, and intuition is how we articulated ourselves through all those dangers, and the final shock-gate of growth, the birth, where most of us forget ourselves, forever. No one can deceive themselves, or be mad themselves, or become insane. They can be out of contact with it, shocked back into life which is too much for the grey shocked core called brain.

And a few pages later you say:

> Not sex only, not magick only, not poetry only, not madness at all, but womb-talk, the first conversations of the growing spirit with the life that lives it and the death it will die into life with its bride the earth.

And I'd like to explore a bit more this notion of poetry as the calculus of growth. And whether you think that is the way in which poetry has its most effective healing properties.

REDGROVE: Of course, that passage has specifically to do with the sort of materialism I was talking about. There is something that must be here, and that is pre-natal experience. You see, I think poetry, the calculus of growth, art generally, is the reflection or the top end, as it were, of the processes that grew us. This is why I say that dreams or poetry are a replay of the genetic code. Something happens to us. We went through nine million years of evolution in nine months in our mothers' wombs, but we've forgotten it for the main part. It seems that in art quite often, particularly when the times are such that nothing seems to be declaring it outside, and people have to go within, that there is a capacity for remembering back into pre-natal experience, or into very fine physical detail. I think one of the first times I noticed this was when I was looking at the paintings of a student here, and he was drawing a cellular structure, a muscular structure, at photo-micrographic enlargement.

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And I happened to recognize this because I did a histology course at Cambridge. And I saw this thing and I said, "That's very interesting, where did you get this?" He was quite offended, he said, "It's an abstract." I said, "That's fine, but can I show you the book?" So I came up here and got the book of histology off the shelf and took it down to show him. He said, "My God, yes!" And this actually helped his drawing, you see, because we've got a microscope here and he looked at the tissues. What was amazing about this was that shortly afterwards he started suffering pains in his leg and his leg muscles started to wither for an unexplained reason. He couldn't get any treatment for this. It was shortly after painting this. Now, I think (there's other evidence for this too) I think that what he was drawing or painting was his leg going wrong, because those were the tissues that were affected. Now, this ability to see within in specific and exact ways, I mean, it's almost medical, isn't it! What a diagnostic instrument! I'm quite serious about this. Now Waddington, the embryologist, has written a book on modern art in which he gives a parallel (I don't think he goes quite as far as I just did), but he says that the organic forms that painters discover in much modern art *may* have to do with an ability to look into cellular structures. He's an embryologist. Why is *he* writing on modern art? Perhaps even further. We forget what happens in the womb, and yet because of this recapitulation of evolution, because of our own growth from molecular structures, because of the bringing together of the world in food and focussed in this womb we're grown in, there's a most extraordinary extent of magical knowledge possible. What we *call* magical knowledge, but it's only natural. This is lost at the birth trauma, only remembered by such explorations as art and poetry provide into the unconscious. You *cannot* understand people's dreams, you *cannot* go through a psychoanalytic session, without realizing that pre-natal experiences are being depicted in dreams, without realizing a change of scale which has to do with experience at a different level of size and intensity. And what is more, without understanding or allowing yourself to be open to the notion of telepathic and precognitive experience also (which seems to happen at this womb-level, this molecular level). Now, what poetry does as a meditation instrument is to accustom one's mind to the mutations which are natural on these levels of being which our ordinary mental constructs do not allow ourselves to consider. Many people, for instance the psychologist Otto Rank, believe that a hero was a person

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for whom the birth-trauma had not been amnesic, a person who had not forgotten his womb-life. I remember also reading a suggestion by one commentator about circumcision. He maintained (it was only a suggestion, he said) that the reason why God insisted so much on circumcision was because it was a trauma. The Jews are great poets and prophets. The beginning of their history started with God stamping his feet and shouting at Abraham, didn't he, that the sign of his covenant was circumcision. Why? Desert hygiene? The Arabs don't circumcise until puberty. The Jews are the only people who circumcise the baby at eight days. The only people. So, why was God so insistent about it? The suggestion here is that it sets up a trauma. If you cut the penis, you (as all wounds do) energize the nervous system appertaining to those organs before, of course, the reproductive organs are mature. So what you do is to set up an ego-structure. By means of this wound you awake very early. You set it up against the birth-trauma, which is a terrible nightmare we try to forget. But the circumcision sets up a memory, an ego, shortly after that time, only eight days. This commentator's suggestion was that people who were not circumcised were more susceptible to mob effects, you see, collective effects, than the Jews, who are individualists. The effect of circumcision is to set up an ego structure, so that you stand as an individual in relation to the birth trauma, rather than there being an undifferentiated force in your psyche.

RASULA: In *In the Country of the Skin* everything is alive, to my perception of it, *everything*. And as you say, even on a molecular level. In fact, human life only seems to be finding itself in terms of the other life it's near to and often *is*. In your poetry also the sense of life isn't tied to the human orientation or human interpretation, by any means. Most of the work in *Dr Faust's Sea-Spiral Spirit* is like this, and even some poems in *The Force* ("The Young Forester Protests," "Really Gone," and "A Testament" are poems which I see in this way). And this really vigorous vitalistic approach to the world is very interesting in relation to a point made by Marie Peel in writing about your work, in which she notes a lack of social reference, and I'd like to ask what you feel about that? With regard to your work, what sorts of responsibilities do you feel, or pressures, to introduce a kind of articulated social awareness?

REDGROVE: Well, I mean I'm only forty-one; you can't do

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everything at once, can you? My attitude to that, really, is that you should get yourself right, before getting the rest right. Though, of course, you may have to sacrifice yourself in the interest of the revolution, but as an artist I don't think this is the priority. You see, over the years I've had to work from inside out; like many artists I'm haunted by certain images which stand between me and my proper life. They contain the life, but they stand in front of it. These images have to be gone through. The only way out is *through* in these cases. This is what I mean by neurosis. With an artist, he's not a neurotic; the neurosis gives him images: they are doorways, they are thresholds. It's only fairly recently that I've been able to understand how these images that have haunted and obsessed my life have arisen not only from my own psychic structures (if there is such a thing, as I think there is) but have also been socially conditioned. We were talking about the war and the English middle-classes. I can see how my life, as is the case with many of my friends and colleagues, is an image of society *also*. I have a growing and forward-looking sense of responsibility about this. I believe, for instance, that if in writing poetry I discover or depict anything of value it is my business to relate this as far as possible to what people understand in their usual lives. This is the reason why I made the novel *The Terrors of Dr Treviles*, which I've written with Penelope Shuttle, almost an explanatory novel. It is not, I trust, a lecture. But it's like *In the Country of the Skin* with explanations. I don't know whether it's more or less effective because of the explanations. But it seemed to me that people who understood *In the Country of the Skin* understood it because of a sympathy of temperament. I would rather like people who do not have a sympathy of temperament to understand the matters that I was talking about and had experienced myself. So that's a responsibility. For example, Freud says the root of neurosis is the refusal to die. My image bearing on this is the idea of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Now what exactly happened in the Eleusinian Mysteries has been lost. It deteriorated and disappeared. But there was something in these rites that changed the people who went through them. This ceremony was at the heart of Greek culture, of Greek civilization, which is still with us. It was the thing that caused Greece to be the civilization that it was. People went through it: they learned something about death which removed anxiety. There are contemporary hymns which say that the person who has been through the Mysteries is fortunate because he doesn't evaporate like the other ghosts, but has learned

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something about death, about the other side. And what obviously happened is that anxiety was removed, to use contemporary terms. Therefore the people were free to grow into themselves. What was this thing that they learned? Something about death. Perhaps that death is more alive than what we call life. Something. Perhaps, I thought that *In the Country of the Skin* was a pale shadow of this, that it showed that everything *was* alive. This is what I mean, I think: that it is the poet's responsibility, perhaps, to discover and reproduce the kind of thing that was going on in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

ERWIN: Do you think a relatively neurosis-free individual is possible?

REDGROVE: Yes. I've met them occasionally (*laughing*).

ERWIN: Are there destructive things attached to *not* being neurotic?

REDGROVE: Yes, because these people almost always involve others in their lives. I think they're people who give a great reflection. Omar Khayyam remarked (not, I think, in the *Rubaiyat,* but somewhere else) that, "I am he who gives a perfect reflection of you," and I think that neurosis-free people do tend to do this. And so if you see a reflection of yourself in this person, you want to follow it. You have a feeling that something can be changed. You have a feeling that they understand. Perhaps they don't. Perhaps it's only the reflection that you get. They can give this reflection because they have this mirror-mind, this ability to reflect without greed, without holding on. They seem to those of us who still have much attachment to ourselves and to usual things to be heartless, because wherever they are fills them, including you. But you need not necessarily be in their mind, as a portion of their being, if you're not there. In other words they don't hang on. Yes, I've met people like this. I think they're people clearly of a most extraordinary and rewarding kind to be with. The only thing is, they love, but you're not the only person they love. So they're inclined to produce jealousies. I mean, I'm describing something which is fairly rare among men but fairly common among women, I think. Mind you, this is a complex subject. The statement I think I'm properly making is that the mind, the psyche, is a very inventive place. It invents in the mode that we distinguish inappropriately as something

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apart, as poetry— it invents in this mode. If a person is damaged or if a person has been rendered too vulnerable or had too bright a light shone on his psyche, he will have a stasis there. And this we call a neurosis or an obsession. He is less likely to suffer from this if he is accustomed to the way his mind, his psyche, works. One way of investigating this is called poetry. The corollary of this is that a study of poetry will cure by making the reactions more fluid. Dissolving the scotoma, it will cure neurosis. It's a corollary. When I say poetry, it can be oral poetry, it can be a rite performed in some open place or in a church, or it can be the improvisation a gifted analyst gives on one's dreams. For instance, the man I've mentioned, John Layard, when he interpreted dreams it was spoken poetry: he improvised on the dream, do you see.

ERWIN: In talking about the involvement of the voice in poetry, what effect do you think conscious effort at control has, in writing the poem?

REDGROVE: Well, I mean, the banal image is riding a bicycle, isn't it? I find, myself, that it's a condition that one musn't ask too hard because that's pre-judging the question; one musn't pull too hard on the strings, as they break; one musn't assume anything; one must be receptive but not yet critical—no, one is both receptive and critical. It's like holding a very good conversation with another person, and in a conversation you have to behave with manners. I mean, if I keep on interrupting you, we'll have no conversation. And vice versa. It's very much like that, I find. I think there are also three very interesting things that happen, stages as it were. There's the stage when you write with exhilaration. Now, the results of that may be very good or very bad. One is improvising with exhilaration or feels very good—there may be incidental beauties among a whole nonsense. This is the jungle that one can invent before one explores, or it may be complete nonsense. One writes with exhilaration, and the result has no necessary relation to the exhilaration. That is one way. And another way is that one can write in depression, one can have something to write (perhaps something one has drafted) and one can feel very depressed about it. This is the control, you see, one can say, "I *will* write this out. Maybe I'll not do anything with it. Let's see. Let's see what happens." And it's very depressing, but you just have to do it. You do that. Now, the curious thing about that is that the results are usually better than

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you'd expect. The depression is in fact, I think, your truly critical abilities at work. Your mental energy is withdrawn into itself for the purposes of work, and one musn't expect reward until the work is done. That's the second way. There is a third way, where all these processes of control and reception seem to be fused and become another person, and *that* person writes for you. The magicians call this (I think this is what they're talking about) the conversation of the holy guardian angel. This is the title for the experience. I think it's the same experience. But *there* questions of control and receptivity are quite irrelevant. There is somebody who is able to accomplish this work and does it. Now, these are mysteries of course, but what I'm saying about a neurosis-free state has something to do with what the magicians call conversations with the holy guardian angel. It's like supposing Rimbaud had decided not to turn his back on it, it's the "I is another," of course. I think the artist experiences all three ways. You know, whatever stage they may be, in various degrees, I think it's valuable to know what's happening. A lot of people get terribly excited in the writing, and they say "It must be all right because I'm excited about it"—and that's a very bad kind, I think. If you're depressed in the writing that is a slightly better guide that something may be going on. Can't explain this. But the third experience is what I think is one's birthright, really. And it happens to many people in many ways, but is a very remarkable and superb experience.

ERWIN: What particular elements in a poem or poetry do you feel are important, say, like rhythm or visual imagery or assonance? Particular elements that you find are really essential for your poetry.

REDGROVE: It's something that John Castor calls the strength of the sentence. But this is begging the question, because the strength of a sentence may be rhythmical, it may be grammatical in for instance the way in which a sentence may be particularly declarative because it's relatively simple, or because it's complex in a way in which the clauses run against each other; you know, the crossways. But it is something very sculptural, I think. When I read a good poem the first sensation of pleasure that I have is of strength in the sentences. That is the first sensation. This is a thing that one can see very quickly, of course, in looking at poetry. It's not the final pleasure, it's the doorway into the other pleasures for me.

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After this I distinguish. My pleasure expands and takes various forms within the poem. That's the first sensation, and it's the thing I want in my own poems. If I can see in my own poems that I have made sentences which are strong, then I feel I've done something. And when I look at a recent poem to see whether I've done it right, I don't look at whether I've got the thought right or whether I've got the rhythm right, I try to get that sensation of ah! it's there. So really, I'm substituting one terminology for another, but I can only say that: it's the strength of the sentences. And I don't quite know what that means. It's a position in space, it's as though the sentence is a space which is filled with dynamic energies which either hold still or interact. It's as though in the sentence there was a transaction which was taking place. As though there was in the poem an articulate energy (Donald Davie's words) transmitting itself from sentence to sentence and from one part of the sentence to another in various ways. Causing various pressures and lightenings and darkenings as it does so.—It's a very material, physical thing. It has to do with structure. And that's the only answer I can give without faking up a lot of remarks about beat and rhythm. I used to think it was something to do with a four- or three-beat line which didn't fuss about how many syllables it had in it. Which is of course sprung rhythm—Hopkins and more loosely *Four Quartets*, going back to Langland and the pre-Chaucerian things like Gawayne and so on. These kinds of sounds. I think it's important to me that poetry not sound Chaucerian; I'm a non-Chaucerian in this sense.

RASULA: In the past few years you've branched out into a variety of forms that are developments beyond the short-poem form you used for your first three or four books. There's the novel, the pieces for voices, a radio-play, and *The Hermaphrodite Album* with Penelope Shuttle and now another novel with her. And I wonder if you see this development, this branching-out, as just occurring over a period of time out of the necessities of things that had to be said and were coming to be said in other than the short-poem form? Or whether this reflects an actual change in your thinking about what can be done in the various forms?

REDGROVE: Well, I always believed that the short-poem form could say everything. In a sense I still do. There's a double answer to this, really, because I've always been afraid of all sorts of things—all of us are. One of the things I was afraid of was writing prose. The

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reason for this is for ten years I earned my living in advertising and journalism. And in order to keep my poetry going I had to separate off the kind of writing I used to earn my living from the real things which, for me at that time, could only be short poems. This was partly due to my idea of prose writing being connected with educational things like examinations and economic things like earning one's living. But poetry has nothing to do with earning one's living, nor with purposes related to that, related to the corrupt capitalist structure that we live in. So I separated off the prose. Now, when I finally was able to bring to mind some things like the insulin shock thing, which of course you're made terribly ashamed of—this is another of the middle-class things. If you do something like that, if you go mad for a short time or pretend to go mad for a short time, you are of course ostracized—if you come out with it. If you're quiet about it they'll tolerate you. Though it's an awfully useful weapon for one's relatives to use. If they happen to disagree with you they can always say "oh he's mad again" or something like this, you see. So I kept the insulin shock thing and various other preoccupations which occur in that book *In the Country of the Skin* very quietly to myself. And it was only as a result of meeting John Layard and meeting Penelope Shuttle that I ceased to be ashamed of these things. At the same time I ceased to be afraid of writing in prose. Thus writing in prose didn't seem to carry penalties and rewards of a monetary kind. So I was able to assimilate the prose thing to the poetry thing. So you see, once again my answer is rather than select one or two alternatives I have to give you both at once. Because both of your alternatives are true. It's both what I found it necessary to say and what I thought the poetry could talk about, or what my poetry could talk about. Both at once.

RASULA: Another characteristic of your later work, I think, is its more directive—possibly moralistic—quality, or its willingness to make statements, definitions and judgements. In the poem "Directive" in *The Force* you say "Attend to the outer world." And in terms of the Jonas/Silas dichotomy, the mud-world/magic world dualism, there is a tendency to favor Silas because, to quote from that book, "Jonas wanted to make maps of this, Silas wanted to live it." Do you agree that you have become, say, more directive in your work? And does this reflect an increasing sense of responsibility as a poet, or stronger convictions about the world which are now being expressed in this way?

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REDGROVE: Stronger convictions about the world, with which go some responsibilities as I tried to say earlier. This goes with the previous question also. One of the reasons for writing poetry is that, as I was saying about Dante last night—it doesn't matter if you're a Catholic when you read Dante. I mean, you may think its a pack of lies, but still it's marvellous. It's as though if you write a good poem nobody can argue with it. It's as though opinions and the relativity of human opinion from one person to another doesn't matter. And in writing those shorter earlier poems, I was finding an area among all the disagreements of life where there was no disagreement. And at that time I used to think that I had no opinions, no declaration to make. I thought this might be related to what Keats calls negative capability. I realize now that this is partly true, but it's partly an evasion. Since the things about which I should have had strong opinions were the things on which I was turning my back, such as the irrelevance and horror of the tribal social structure. And the reason why I didn't have opinions, or a direction in a general sense, was because I refused to consider these matters. I refused to consider, for instance, that marriage to one person and bringing up a family were not necessarily centrally important things, and that one could change them. That one's masters and employers were not always right. See, I'm very stupid, for a long time I believed everything that everybody told me. And I found in poetry that there was no sense in which these things might be important, and that there might be an unbearable conflict; that in poetry, in making the poems which were of course about all of this obliquely, is where there was a reconciliation. But I could not intellectually face the consequences of being alive in this country at this time. As a result of these various events I've mentioned I'm now better able to face this, and to understand that much of what I was about before, though true within its own terms, was also something of an evasion. I think that's about it. But of course this happens to everybody as they grow. At first you're in the family home, and if you write poetry because your father is always arguing with you or always trying to put you down and this poetry is a place where there's no question of argument, this is your business for the time. If you stay there and things start to putrefy, well then you stink. I certainly began to stink (*laughing*), I probably stink a bit differently now. I have a view of life, or a hypothesis of life now, which the evidence doesn't seem to contradict. And at that time I had a partial view of life which, had I opened myself to other evidence, would have been full of con-

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tradictions. I suffered many severe neurotic symptoms because of this evasion. And writing poetry of course was one of the ways in which I came in relation to these things. I mustn't say understand them—to come into relation with them rather than to avoid them, as I believe many of my contemporaries do. I don't wish to make it seem as if I bring myself above them in this respect: I'm an infant taking steps. But I mean, some people just don't get born at all, really.

RASULA: I wonder what your sense of audience is, whether you write for a particular individual or a group of people or another aspect of yourself or what? Or how all these things revolve. Earlier you mentioned that in *The Hermaphrodite Album* you and Penelope were writing these poems to each other, each partially in a process of becoming the other. And I wonder what other sense of a reader you may have?

REDGROVE: I think my answer may once again appear to beg the question. I write for people who understand the language. I write for people who, in more banal terms perhaps, love the language and respond to it very profoundly. These are the people I write for, because writing for such people or such a person I learn myself. This is why feedback in relationship with the audience is important. Because you're learning all the time. I think in writing for such a person, if language is something that grows organically, one is writing for life itself. So one could say in that case that one is writing for the muse. This would be the direction that it takes; and this is true too, one way of putting it. But the simple one is for people who understand the language. Is it an educational purpose? I write to the best of my understanding. I think Graves puts this well—he says he writes for the muse, but he also says he sometimes writes for elder poets. He says that he writes for John Skelton. Now, you're perfectly sure John Skelton understands the language. That is, he won't—becuase he can't respond to a grammatical movement or an image—say the poem's no good. He will be able to see what the poem intends, because he loves and understands the language. And that's a good person to write for. I don't write for Bob Dylan, say, because I'm perfectly sure that Bob Dylan understands rather a narrow spectrum of the language. I don't write for people who don't read books or listen to each other but sit in a trance in front of television when they've finished their work at the office. I don't

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write for those people. I mean, I don't think I can write a television play, for instance. But I do write for people who listen to the radio, sometimes. I mean, it doesn't really beg the question, that answer. Have I a revolutionary notion of audience? A cultural unity in the world? Yes, but I find this a remote ideal, practically speaking. People I write for are also people from whom I can learn. Which is the feedback thing. Obviously some of the people I'm writing for are persons like yourself who are interested enough in my work to come and ask me about it. This is somebody I write for. I don't know them in advance. And how very excellent it is to discover that somebody *is* interested in what one has said! So it's a help. So I've been writing for you. I'd better write better. That's it, that's it, that's the answer—the question's like a dream (*laughing*), it's like a dream: and somebody says, "Who's your audience, who do you write for?" I should just roll in laughter and say *you*! (*laughing*). I once had a dream in which my parents were in the kitchen, and they were saying, "What's all this about the unconscious, then? What is the unconscious? Tell me what the unconscious is. Never heard of such a thing. What is it?" And I was very carefully explaining to them all the theories from Charcot onwards, because I'd been lecturing on psychology rather foolishly—one shouldn't lecture on psychology. And I told this dream to somebody and he said, "That's nonsense, you should have rolled in laughter and pointed at them and said YOU, you're the unconscious!" You see, because one's mother and father were the people concerned. Now this is a different order of things: you are the conscious, I'm the unconscious (*laughter*). But we turn and turn about here, this is the proper relationship.

RASULA: Insofar as you can be aware of what effect you have on a reader, are you more interested in provoking thought and awareness—widening perceptions of the reader—or in conveying and provoking a sense of responsibility? Or do you think this is a false division?

REDGROVE: I think it's a false division. I think awareness implies responsibility. To put it quite simply, I have experiences of wholeness and awareness which are brought about to me when I am in that area of things which has to do with my writing. It may be that I may achieve that *in* my writing, a sense that I am one and better than I usually am, more aware, more advanced, more able, a

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better person altogether. This is associated with my writing. When I read other people's poems it produces that state in me. So I think it's not unreasonable to suppose that if I write a good poem it will produce that state in other people. And I don't regard anything I've done as either final or my best work, because . . . Who would? I'd much rather be Shakespeare, but Shakespeare is done, he's done Shakespeare. I haven't done mine yet.

ERWIN: What about the overall effect of the arts on the world? What kind of conditioning effects do you think art has had on time and man, any?

REDGROVE: Yes. I think art-forms are responsible for the development of historical fact. I think societies take certain interior decisions—which may not appear to them to be decisions but rather insights—and the society develops accordingly. I hold an opposite belief not to Marx himself, who would allow this, but to many Marxists. For instance, what I was saying about the Jews conceiving a God who requires a certain circumcision. If this is true, if the psychological notion is true, and it would be very surprising if circumcision did not have a profound psychological effect on a child, and since they're the only race to do this circumcision so early, it would account for (not so much account for as explain)—but it would be a seeding point of their history. But to decide to intuit this necessity is an artistic decision. I don't mean an aesthetic decision: I mean, you don't decide that a penis looks better without a foreskin. I mean an artistic decision, a decision by image, by an image which conflates thought, feeling, sensation and intuition, all four faculties at once, and appears as a vision. When the Greeks "invented" Zeus, who was originally the sound of the dawn arising, the sound of the dawn wind, the word "zeus" meant first light. This was a moment between darkness and light where there was insight, where a world was entered in which many consequences were glimpsed which could not be known by ordinary methods of going about the world, which are linear methods. This moment between darkness and light was where many things were seen, many things that the Greeks saw in their own natures that were seen in advance. You can put it as un-metaphysically as that, if you like, though I think more is involved. And these events being seen at this moment so far into the future could only be told in the figure of a god called Zeus, whose attributes and figure and emblem guided the development of Greek history. I think this is how art works. Now, you can't

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there make a difference between prophetic religion and the emblems which express it, which will require artists for their making. And only if you make a distinction between Aaron and Moses can you say that the prophet is not an artist. I'm talking about the Schoenberg thing where Moses can hardly speak and hears the insights, so Aaron speaks for him. I think this is very much a later division, this is a contemporary division between a person who is a person of insight and the person who expresses the insight. I think this is not what we want, if we can avoid it, not what we're working towards.

ERWIN: You don't agree with Auden's comment, then, that the history of man would have been the same if Shakespeare and Mozart had never lived?

REDGROVE: Well, it's a most arrogant remark, that. I mean, I don't know *why* he likes to shit on himself like this. How can he possibly know? And isn't it much more likely that it has altered as a result of these people seeing very deeply into the psyche? Isn't it much more likely that Goethe, discerning in his own psyche and the psyche of his culture the collective psyche, the myth of Faust, has enabled people to focus on their own desires and their own mistakes much more clearly than if he hadn't written? I think the evidence is all against Auden's remark. Certainly with the individual the processes of development and growth into oneself are related, I believe, to what happens in poetry. The books one reads, the experiences one has, the shocks of recognition one has in seeing likenesses between a person who's written a long time ago and oneself. All these things affect the individual. What prevents them from affecting the collective? Why should Auden make such a remark? I'm not aware that he justifies this view. I mean, a lot of writers on political history *do* attempt to maintain this, you know, that writers as individuals did not have much effect on the collective. But I don't think this is a view of history that can be maintained. One does have leaders and leaders who are poets.

ERWIN: One last question. How does the idea of poetry as sacred activity accommodate you? Do you find it has often, say, surpassed or supplanted the role of traditional religion?

REDGROVE: Poetry's clearly a branch of religion. For myself, all the things that official religion ought to be about is in poetry. If we had

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a proper religion, that is, a psychologically useful religion in this country, it would be of course highly poetic. Once again I seem to be begging the question, don't I? What poetry is about is what is commonly called sacred. One can use any number of terms for this sense of the sacramental in existence, that everything that one does is very very real, that either within or without one there are personages who are full of knowledge and perhaps more than what we call human, or perhaps more truly human, personages in nature who suddenly appear and disappear. All these things poetry has to do with, which are not only true matters but absolutely necessary. I say "psychologically useful." You see, we've forgotten that religion is for anything. What it's for—religion is only the name of becoming ourselves. But in this country at any rate our official religion doesn't have anything to do with anything actually going on, nothing to do with actual discoveries about yourself or other people. Only a rather stolid mode of conduct and moral prohibition. A religion, any religion worth its name, has to have women in it. Because half the world is. This is clear, and poetry's about women. One of the things it's about, of course. And the official religions leave sex out of it. I mean, it's all very well to have the four Gospels, but where are the sayings of Mary? Once again, to go back to earlier religions about that: the religions of Greece not only talked about the Zeus cult a little, but there was a Hera cult too. Now, the Hera cult (I musn't confuse her with the goddess of the hearth)—this was the goddess of womanhood, of I think they say matronhood. But at any rate what the Hera cult studied was the female menstrual cycle. That is, in this religion of Hera the woman was allowed, not discouraged, was allowed to contemplate the cyclical form of her own nature and her different abilities at various times of her monthly period, which was always related in the cults of Hera to the phases of the moon. Now, in antiquity it was held as a commonplace that a woman would menstruate with some relationship to the moon. This has been mocked by Joyce, who says if that's the case why don't all women bleed at once? Of course, if they live in community they do. He didn't seem to realize that, he was afraid of the subject, it's a taboo subject—there's nothing written on it. Jung, writing about the Miller phantasies (Miller was a woman). But you don't get any sense that a certain vision happened at a certain time of the month. In fact, over the month the dreams tell a certain story. Which has to do with these archetypal fears. Well, the statisticians can't decide whether a woman menstruates with the moon or against it or what relationships there

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are. Though there are varying accounts of this. The Swedish chemist Arrhenius did a survey on this, he said yes, the majority of women menstruated on the new moon. A recent German study confirms this; a North American study contradicts it. There is a Yugoslavian physician who claims 98% contraceptive technique—I think the scheme is that the woman ovulates at the phase of the moon that obtained when she was born. An empirical thing. But you see if you avoid sex then, and just have sex at other times of the moon's phases, there won't be conception. This is cheaper than the pill. This is one of the things that must have been taught in the Hera cult. These people did not contemplate the moon because it was irrelevant to them, but because it was profoundly important. Not only for mental knowledge, visionary knowledge of yourself in relation to the pulses of the universe, but practical household knowledge—that is, will you have sex, do you want a child at this time. Perhaps more, because there are legends that modern physicians are only just beginning to approach. That the two ovaries give (of course the modern idea is that the sperm determine the sex, but there's some doubt about that)—but the eggs come from alternative ovaries. And there is some suggestion that conception related to certain aspects of the moon's phases would give you a boy or a girl, depending on what you wanted. This is very important internal knowledge. And it's a kind of knowledge which no woman in our culture is provided with. In talking to students a woman says, "Oh I can't work, what shall I do? I'm finished as an artist." I say, "Well, I'm terribly sorry about this. What week are you in?" And she said "oh." And I say, "What do you like doing at this time?" She says she likes cooking. "It's your time to cook. Simple, isn't it?" I've seen people have dreams in which the egg they are making appears in the dream. One very beautiful one was of an earring which was unused, put aside, a sparkling thing, very beautiful. But, you know, this is true knowledge which is hardly touched. Now, it's poetic knowledge. It's also what's right in front of one's nose. I had the librarian here check out what had been written on the subject—does a woman's psychology change according to her time and period? There's one paper in 1932, another a bit later on, the authorities on woman's psychology mention it hardly at all. But it's true. So that's an example of a practical religion which is poetic-useful and which is quite gone. It's one of the things Women's Lib is about, what Robert Graves calls the return of the goddess. He touches on the subject once in *The White Goddess*, he actually manages to mention menstruation. It's the taboo subject.

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GRACE SCHULMAN

Recovery

Recovery: returning
to the village where forests
are spirals of fire, to climb
narrow roads and find that pine
torn by lightning, its branches holding
stars of needles that strain the sky,
pointing upward, stiff
as hands in prayer.

To return in silence; I have touched
the nightingale I cannot see,
crossing the river
that drives through rocks
and sings in my blood,
treasure of my being.

I remember how the surgeon smiled, masked
in green gauze. I woke to eyes
watching me through lenses; voices
that said it was over, murmuring
"recover."

Here I rise
with the mountains.
I have given my name
and my language
to the primitive saints
in the chapel. I live in their light
and see the faces of all people
as one face.

Love, there is a world of pain
where sun fires bricks and glass
slowly as a season. I cherish pain
for it stills the sky to a halt,
arresting night.
Here may I see

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those shadows stagger
that etch the olive,
recover,
follow a sun that makes days
green as the beginning,
light as creation;
let the river return things whole
in exchange for what we have broken.

HAROLD WITT

Friends

The Quakers, speaking plainly, knew
that Friends are what we're meant to be,
that they were right, though they were few,

in keeping to a loving view.
A brotherly society,
the Quakers, speaking plainly, knew

they had to act as Christians do
no matter who might not agree
that they were right. Though they were few—

bonnets and hats of somber hue,
quaintly saying "thou" and "thee"—
the Quakers, speaking plainly, knew

war's not peace and lies aren't true
and man's his own worst enemy.
That they were right (though they were few)

in light of what we're going through
today—it's easier to see.
The Quakers, speaking plainly, *knew*
that they were right. Though they were few.

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JOHN SIMON

Laughter in the Soul: Molière's *Misanthrope*

IT HAS BECOME A CRITICAL COMMONPLACE that Molière's *Le Misanthrope* occupies the same place in Western comedy that *Hamlet* does in tragedy. When this remark is made casually, as it often is, it may be that the speaker is not even aware of what a great statement (in Goethe's famous phrase) he has calmly uttered. For although one could argue, for example, that *Tartuffe* and *King Lear* are even more extraordinary plays, the everlasting fascination of *Hamlet* and the *Misanthrope* lies in the infinite interpretations their respective protagonists have elicited, which is to say in the susceptibility of these protagonists to become emblematic embodiments of the various sensibilities of individuals in different eras, indeed of the collective sensibilities of those eras themselves.

Significantly, both the *Misanthrope* and *Hamlet* belong to two genres simultaneously: besides being a great comedy and tragedy, respectively, they are also problem plays leaving us with a great many more questions than answers. Thus at the end of *Othello,* for instance, we know well enough what caused the tragic outcome and how, but for human nature—or a particular kind of human nature—things could have turned out differently. In *Hamlet* we can have no such certainties, and the same is true of the *Misanthrope,* which, unlike other plays by Molière, comes to an open ending: Alceste rushes off to some unpeopled place to become a recluse, while Philinte and Eliante hurry after him to reclaim him for society. As Martin Turnell observed in *The Classical Moment:* "In no other play does Molière reveal such variety and complexity of feelings, but in no other does he show such reluctance to judge the individual or so marked a tendency to call in question all accepted standards and formulas."

The problem-play aspect of the *Misanthrope* lies, first of all, in that it works through indirection. The person who does not notice this will feel cheated, even if he is no less a man than Rousseau. "This," complained Jean-Jacques, "is not what we come to your theater to see; your misanthrope is not one perfect misanthropic crystal; on the contrary, he is changeable and his behavior is not consistently directed according to the principle of misanthropy." But Molière was, of course, no La Bruyère, and *vive la différence!* Rousseau's disappointment is based on a double misunderstanding: that the play concerns solely Alceste, and that misanthropy is a simple dislike of people.

There is in the *Aufzeichnungen,* the posthumously published jottings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, a suggestive yet slightly mysterious passage about the play:

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> In the *Misanthrope*, the entire dialogue is a critique, from start to finish: Alceste criticizes Célimène, or Philinthe [sic] criticizes Alceste, or vice versa, or Alceste the courtiers or an individual courtier, or the courtiers (together with Célimène) criticize absent persons, or Alceste criticizes them for their criticism; or Eliante criticizes Alceste's love for Célimène, or he himself criticizes his love; Arsinoé comes to criticize Célimène, and the latter returns her criticism, etc. etc. Criticism is but one of the forms of indirection.

The conclusion to this otherwise very useful observation is a bit gnomic, but it becomes clearer if we set it alongside a passage from Sainte-Beuve's essay on the death of Sir Walter Scott, in which the critic points out that Scott was not one of the greatest writers:

> Geniuses of this sort who have the gift of forgetting themselves and transforming themselves into an infinite number of personages whom they make live, speak, and act in a thousand touching and entertaining ways, are often capable of very ardent passions of their own, although they never express them directly. It is hard to believe, for instance, that Shakespeare and Molière, the two highest specimens of this class of mind, have never felt with a profound and sometimes bitter passion the things of life.

The *Misanthrope* strikes me as a supreme example of expressing such a bitter passion indirectly, so as not to appear very strongly to be saying it at all. The indirectness of its expression is explicable only partly, I think, by the natural fastidiousness of genius, which tends to clothe its absolutes in the garments of relativism because it is too perceptive to overlook what is particular, private, relative even in the most orthodox-seeming absolute (a cognizance whose lack makes Alceste look both ridiculous and pitiful); it is also, I believe, motivated by the necessity of caution in not-so-good King Louis's golden days—the desire, in short, not to fall into the same trap as one's protagonist.

I am inclined to disagree with Gide's argument in a lecture on "The Importance of the Audience," which runs: " 'C'est une étrange entreprise,' said Molière, 'que celle de faire rire les honnêtes gens.' A strange enterprise, and doubtless arduous, but to it we owe his masterpieces. And if Molière had aimed only at getting a laugh out of his cook, as is also alleged, we should have had further *Fourberies de Scapin* and further *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*—but I doubt if he would have given us the *Misanthrope*. These *honnêtes gens*, as Molière called them, equally distant from a court a little too rigid in its ways and a pit a little too free, were precisely what Molière regarded as *his public*; and this was the public to which he addressed himself. The court of Louis XIV represented formalism; the pit, naturalism; they represented *good taste*." I wonder whether Molière could trust even these stirling people or gentlefolk—or however *honnêtes gens* can best be rendered—to accept a view of society in which everyone is corrupt,

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or at least mildly hypocritical and ineffectual, like the worthy Philinte (a *raisonneur* much more ambiguous than Molière's other ones), or, at the very best, noble but ultimately passive, like Eliante.

Either there were not enough *honnêtes gens* around, or their perceptions were not quite up to the *Misanthrope,* for it was only a modest success, just a little better than a mild failure. Yet Gide may have been right in a sense different from the one he intended: Molière may have succeeded so well with this play *sub specie aeternitatis* precisely because, to entertain (or not scandalize) these good people, he encoded rather than made manifest his message. Accordingly, the play has been viewed in two principal ways. One might be called the romantic view, as expressed, say, by Mauriac in his "Alceste" *(Journal 1932-1939):*

> The comic in Alceste stems from the spectacle of a lover who collides everywhere with that brilliant and hard surface of mendacity, that mirror of the world, those formulas, gestures—all that protocol whose excuse for being is precisely to disguise the true thoughts, to withhold our spontaneous reactions, to interrupt our initial movement. But very early on these head-buttings of Alceste's no longer make the spectator laugh, because they correspond to a painful need to know at any cost whose torment almost all men have known—and it is for this reason that the two last acts of the *Misanthrope* give off a well-nigh tragic sound, it is for this reason that their beauty is sad.

What might be called the classical interpretation—which, officially, was also Molière's—perceives Alceste as an essentially comic character. This is stated by W. G. Moore in a somewhat more up-to-date manner in his *Molière: A New Criticism:*

> [Alceste] is ridiculous because he forgets that he is part of the picture. He is antisocial because he recommends on grounds of principle courses of action by which he stands to gain. It is one thing to reprove flattery and flirtation; it is quite another to insist that one be preferred to all other suitors . . . what Alceste wanted, unbeknown to himself, was recognition, preference, distinction.

More traditionally, the classical view would hold simply that Alceste carries his virtues to the point of fanatical excess, which vitiates their value. In the notes to his Pléïade edition of Molière, Maurice Rat cites Lessing's dictum that a person can be ridiculous without being contemptible by way of summing up the funny but painful case of "this so naïve, stubborn young man who has the chimerical aim of wanting to correct the entire world."

But, as has more recently been pointed out by several commentators, the play, to be properly understood, must not be viewed merely as the story of Alceste. Indeed, it is hardly a story at all, for such action as there is consists entirely of arguments and more arguments, and a few revela-

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tions mostly through intercepted letters. Still, in W. G. Moore's apt formulation, "a canvas is rolled back, in conversations so momentous that they seem to be events." These conversations constitute the chain of critiques detected by Hofmannsthal; they are not only brilliant in themselves, they also add up to a magisterially orchestrated, sweeping attack on society as a whole. For Molière cogently interweaves several strands. There is, first, an assault on the lying and fawning of the age, the hypocrisy and sycophancy against which Alceste keeps inveighing, either in general terms or by adducing specific instances—it is in this context that the Alceste-Oronte quarrel takes on its symptomatic signifiance. We hear, next, of Alceste's lawsuit, which he stands to lose because he flatly refuses to call on the judges and sweettalk them, and so the notion of sociopolitical injustice joins that of social dissembling. When Célimène appears, the theme of the devaluation of love into flirtatiousness and at least spiritual, if not sexual, infidelity is introduced. Over against these provocations for Alceste's understandable but immoderate philippics, we get the temperate voice of Philinte, soothingly counseling: ". . . faisons un peu grâce à la nature humaine"—advice that goes unheeded by our hero.

But Alceste is a complex figure despite his underlying predictability. When Philinte persuasively conveys to him that Eliante would suit him better than her cousin, he replies: "Il est vrai: ma raison me le dit chaque jour;/ Mais la raison n'est pas ce qui règle l'amour." This is a dizzyingly complex statement. Yes, the perfectionist in Alceste knows that reason would opt for Eliante; but reason, he says, is not what governs love relationships. True enough, but true in the manner of old adages, folk wisdom, received knowledge; must he, the man who would change the whole world, acquiesce in such old saws? Certainly, if they serve his purpose, and the purpose of this rationalist-moralist-idealist is, at this point, to remain as self-deluded as possible because his passion must be justified. Such self-contradiction would seem to be ridiculous, the matter of comedy—but hold! Is it really? After all, the universe Alceste wants is one of truth, honesty, and (as he keeps insisting in a way that must have seemed revolutionary to a century whose notion of nature—the pastoral—was the very paradigm of artificiality) honest-to-goodness naturalness. When he damns Oronte's sonnet it is primarily because "Ce n'est que jeu de mots, qu'affectation pure,/ Et ce n'est point ainsi que parle la nature." And, surely, to love and desire simply, forthrightly, "naturally" a woman who happens to be Célimène rather than Eliante is not in itself unnatural, though it may be unwise.

Just what, however, is Alceste's idea of "the natural"? It is, among other things, the old song:

Si le Roi m'avait donné
Paris, sa grand'ville,
Et qu'il me fallût quitter
L'amour de ma mie,
Je dirais au roi Henri:

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"Reprenez votre Paris,
J'aime mieux ma mie, au gué!
J'aime mieux ma mie."

If Molière is literally assigning this *vieille chanson* to the coarse but better (because not artificial) taste of *nos pères,* he is historically wrong; it has been shown that the King Henry in question is the second, not the fourth, of that name. But *pères* probably means forefathers, and what is being opposed here is the "méchant goût du siècle" with something that stems from the folk-mouth. Indeed, the song appears, *mutatis mutandis,* in Italy too, as Benedetto Croce reminds us: "Se il papa mi donasse tutta Roma,/ e mi dicesse:—Lascia andar chi t'ama—/ io gli direi di no, Sacra Corona." Yet, we wonder, is this necessarily the language, the only language, of true love? Once a society becomes more complex—artistically, scientifically, culturally—cannot sensibility, and the language that expresses it, legitimately change into something more complicated, more stylized, but not *ipso facto* less real? And, in that sense, is Oronte's poem all that bad in the day of the metaphysical conceit, of Marinism and Gongorism and the not inconsiderable poetry they yielded?

What Alceste is really after is simplicity. Call him misanthropist, purist, idealist, perfectionist, meliorist gone pessimistic, or what you will, above all other things he is a reactionary against the preciosity of the age, a back-to-naturist, an advocate of simplicity. But—and here lies his comic preposterousness and therewith his personal tragedy—he fails to understand that simplicity, at least when it is translated into utterance, is also a style, is also something arrived at with possibly much toilsome polishing. The author of the *ur-Si le Roi* may have had a highly turbulent and complicated love relationship with one or many women, and was surely not that Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme and King of Navarre, who is its apparent speaker. What Alceste is after, then, is nothing more or less than a change of style, or, as Auden put it in the last verse of *his* quasi-sonnet: "New styles of architecture, a change of heart."

What makes Alceste touching—perhaps comically, rather than pathetically, touching—is that he is better, or, if you prefer, worse than his word: importuned by Oronte for a verdict on his sonnet, he first tries desperately to find ways of not having to give one, then to give it in the most indirect, general, tactful way possible. So we soon realize that Alceste's is a double-edged comedy (or, as always in this play where the two have a brilliant way of becoming one, double-edged pathos): it is not only that his position is exaggerated and intransigent, it is also that he himself cannot truly abide by it, either in social intercourse or in love. But besides this basic inconsistency, there is also the profound paradox inherent in misanthropy: such detestation for the ways of mankind must be a love turned to hate and, as such, has about it a ludicrous, as it were transvestite, air. The shrewd Célimène spots it when she retorts to Alceste's "Personne n'a, Madame, aimé comme je fais" with "En effet, la méthode en est toute nouvelle,/ Car vous aimez les gens pour leur faire

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querelle." She is absolutely right, except that she has got it backwards: Alceste's love is not querulous; his querulousness is, in fact, his love.

If the misunderstanding of the relativity of simplicity is one of Alceste's problems, the other is a kind of orgiastic enjoyment of excess, especially excess that is damaging to himself—in short, spiritual masochism. I reject utterly certain neocritical attempts to make Molière's drama into something formalistic and nonpsychological, as when Moore concludes:

> . . . we should give "psychology" a rest in explanations of Molière's work . . . too many experts have assumed that Molière offers a realist set of characters. . . . We know why the text was written: to provoke enjoyment by suggesting ridiculous ideas and postures. Is it not possible to do this without profound and accurate psychology? Some years ago the Abbé Bremond made a strong plea that Racine should not be thought of as primarily psychologist but as a poet. Just as he found the actions and reactions of Racinian characters neither very new nor very subtle, so might it be claimed that in the case of Molière we have too easily assumed that the skill must lie in the accuracy of character-drawing. But poets need not be, and are not, accurate . . .

As a corrective to an overpsychologizing view of Molière, this is a valid statement; but to throw out the psychologist in order to vindicate the poet is an egregious error, particularly since Molière's greatness lies in being supremely both, and in managing to fuse them so perfectly.

Now, this orgiastic self-destructive rage of Alceste's appears already in I, i: "Moi, je veux me fâcher, et ne veux point entendre." He *wants* to lose his lawsuit: "Je voudrais, m'en coutât-il grand-chose./ Pour la beauté du fait avoir perdu ma cause." He will elaborate on this in V, i in a couple of tirades which, proceeding from "J'ai pour moi la justice, et je perds mon procès!" lead to the declaration that the case is to live for posterity "Comme une marque insigne, un fameux témoignage/ De la méchanceté des hommes de notre âge." The cutting off of one's nose to spite one's face is gleefully evident here underneath the homily: ". . . pour vingt-mille francs j'aurai droit de pester/ Contre l'iniquité de la nature humaine,/ Et de nourrir pour elle une immortelle haine." Paradoxically, the advocate of nature has come full circle to an immortal hatred of nature, of which human nature is, inevitably, a large part. And these social excesses are matched by amorous ones. When Célimène's fickleness is already fairly evident, Alceste does two things. He first describes (IV, iii) with cold self-analytical accuracy what his procedure has been: "Par ces fréquents soupçons, qu'on trouvait odieux,/ Je cherchais le malheur qu'ont rencontré mes yeux." It is what the German proverb calls *den Teufel an die Wand malen*—painting the devil on the wall, and thus enabling him forthwith to appear in the flesh. But while one part of Alceste's psyche wants to know the worst, even to the extent of helping it into existence, the other half, only a few moments later, wants not to know, even to the extent of suppressing the evidence. He pleads with Célimène: "Efforcez-

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vous ici de paraître fidèle,/ Et je m'efforcerai, moi, de vous croire telle." This Alceste, so far from being an oversimplification in the direction of a nonpsychological comedic stylization (which, at other times, he can fleetingly be), is here revealed as a human being of almost Proustian complexity.

What is certain beyond all the ambiguities and contradictions is a kind of arrogance, one that, again, is as pathetic as it is comic. Alceste may well be truest to himself when he exclaims, at the end of IV, iii, that he wishes Célimène had neither rank nor wealth, so that his own heart could with a splendid self-sacrificial gesture repair the injustice of such a destiny, "Et que j'eusse la joie et la gloire, en ce jour,/ De vous voir tenir tout des mains de mon amour." Rightly can Célimène snap back, "C'est me vouloir du bien d'une étrange manière." But for Alceste the manner is not strange: for him there is no *joie* without *gloire,* and if there is to be no glory of fulfillment, let there be glory in unflinching rejection. When, in II, iv, Célimène, with fine brio, accused him of having to be "l'esprit contrariant" (premonitions of Goethe's Mephistopheles, *der Geist der stets verneint*) who carries "l'honneur de contredire" to the point of combatting his own sentiments, as she says, the moment he encounters them in someone else's mouth, Alceste still has a halfway plausible comeback: "C'est que jamais, morbleu! les hommes n'ont raison,/ Que le chagrin contre eux est toujours de saison . . ." This is particularly moving from someone who, trying to let Oronte off easy, was willing (I, ii) to make excuses for mankind, pointing out that "eût-on, d'autre part, cent belles qualités,/ On regarde les gens par leurs méchants côtés." But by the end of the play, as everything collapses (V, iv), he can announce his final intention: "Montrer que c'est à tort que sages on nous nomme,/ Et que dans tous les coeurs il est toujours de l'homme." The misanthropification, so to speak, has become total. In I, i, the mortal malady had not yet reached the heart: "*Je veux qu'on soit sincère, et qu'en homme d'honneur/* On ne lâche aucun mot qui ne parte du coeur." Now, frightfully, the very heart has been infected by the disease of being human. This outcry, which might seem the last word in ludicrousness, is it so far removed from the mad—or not so mad—Lear's warning to the blind Gloucester about to kiss the hand he has recognized as his abused sovereign's: "Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality"? For, surely, Lear's *mortality* is a synonym for being human, that fundamental *homme* that Alceste shudderingly perceives as the ultimate unuprootable evil. There are, of course, always spectators who snigger when Lear makes that heartrending remark, though it is anything but funny; no more so is Alceste's *cri de coeur* against the humanness of the human heart. In this rockbottom revulsion from what is quintessentially human, which is as justified as it is unjust, as tragic as it is comic, comedy and tragedy meet and become one on ground that is, however, much closer to tragedy than to comedy.

If part of the *Misanthrope's* greatness lies, then, in its pushing comedy as far in the direction of tragedy as it can go (so that it was hardly iconoclastic for Courteline, in his sequel, *La Conversion d'Alceste*, to bring back the reformed misanthrope from his self-exile, only to have him

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tragically discover Célimène in Philinte's arms, and so cry out in horror as the curtain descends—I quote from memory—"Mon unique amour! Ma seule amitié!"), another part lies in the play's not being the mere portrait of a person, and a rather special one at that, but, as I said before, the panorama of a society as well.

When Célimène and Arsinoé have at each other with faintly disguised ironies that tear great gashes in their egos, when Célimène and the two little marquis make devastating fun of any number of acquaintances, or when Philinte and Eliante court each other with a delicacy of tact carried to extremes, these scenes are not mere filler material: they show how beneath the elaborate courtliness of manners—sometimes, as in the Célimène-Arsinoé contest, reduced to a mere ridiculous shell; at other times, as in the obloquy trio for Célimène and the marquis, allowed naked expression behind the victims' backs—everything in society has become, at best, a polite mask; at worst, undisguised malevolence. Here we must again recall Hofmannsthal's observation that the play is an extended, multifaceted critique, and that this constant criticism is only an indirect way of—let me spell out what both Molière (out of prudence) and Hofmannsthal (in the shorthand of a diary) merely intimated—showing the fragility and impugnability of all human positions. Even Philinte, sweetly reasonable as he is, is too schematic, too academic in his approach, a fact he betrays when, without fully realizing its implications, he declares to Alceste (I, i): "Mon flegme est philosophe autant que votre bile"—a statement whose self-damaging impact is reinforced by its echoing Philinte's earlier reproof of Alceste: "Ce chagrin philosophe est un peu trop sauvage." Once it is codified into a philosophy, an emotion freezes into a defect. And speaking of defects, is it not typical of the rigidity of eminent scholars for the distinguished W. P. Ker to have said, in a lecture "On Comedy": "Would not one go to Plato or to Pascal, rather than to Menander or Molière, for the finest conversational humour, the true comic irony?" Such philophilosophy is *un peu trop académique*.

That leaves only Eliante, who seems, and seems to remain, perfect. It would be good to know exactly what Molière intended with her. A way of showing Alceste's misguidedness in love? A reward for the tactful and loyal Philinte? A foil for Célimène? All of those, no doubt; but in so perfect a play we expect each character to have more than a merely passive importance. I would hazard a guess: as the only character who, even more than Philinte, has no effect on the play's happenings, she testifies to the fact that the thoroughly good and sensible person is a freak and outsider, as irrelevant to the vagaries of society as to the course of history.

Yet in the midst of all this fineness we must not forget the most astonishing fact of this play: that it accomplishes its revelations almost exclusively through language-as-character, and only minimally through plot. I am not referring here to the frequent sonorous felicities as in, for example, "Et jamais, quelque ap*pui* qu'on *puis*se avoir d'ailleurs,/ On ne doit se *brouiller* avec ses grands *brailleurs*." I am referring, rather, to the way language is made to carry all kinds of content that could not have

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been put more palpably onto the seventeenth-century stage—sexuality, for instance. It does not seem at all fanciful to me to argue that the great Alceste-Célimène scene (IV, iii), with its continuous reversal of positions, power, and control is a verbal equivalent for a sexual encounter, a figurative sexual act. That some such intention was conscious in Molière's mind is suggested even by the way the playwright cast the *Misanthrope:* Alceste was played by himself; Célimène by his wife, whose faithlessness caused him much chagrin; Eliante by Mlle de Brie, his mistress; and Arsinoé by Mlle du Parc, who rejected his advances. If one scrutinizes IV, iii minutely, one can find, I think, the outline of a frenetic sexual bout, starting in a jealous rage, climaxing in an orgasm of self-deception, and subsiding into postcoital sadness. But the language performs on other levels as well, not least on that of a very Chekhovian refusal of the characters to understand or even hear one another and saying the most self-revealing things without hearing what they themselves are saying—as when Célimène thinks she is merely deriding Arsinoé with "Ce grand aveuglement où chacun est pour soi," but is really passing judgment on herself, and on all the dramatis personae and the world they embody.

The foregoing meditation on the *Misanthrope* was prompted by its production by the National Theatre of Great Britain under John Dexter, which, on a guest engagement here, achieved some very fine things, but also missed some most important points. Fallible as it was—its fallibility emblematized by the Tony Harrison adaptation, which shifts the scene from the Sun King's Paris of 1666 to De Gaulle's of 1966, resulting in some unexpected felicities as well as expectable *contresens*—it was good to see the play on our boards. Already at the beginning of this century, the Austrian poet-playwright-essayist Richard von Schaukal noted that "we enjoy the theater of high style, say Molière, as an exquisite rarity such as a Meissen figurine in a glass case." It is useful that Dexter's production, whatever its shortcomings, brought the play nearer to present-day audiences. Martin Turnell was most likely right when he explained Molière's turning to lighter subjects by the assumption that "[the playwright] must have perceived that in the *Misanthrope* he had written something which was 'above the heads' of many of his audience." Yet even in its own day the play found true understanders, like that Donneau de Visé who, from being Molière's detractor, became his friend, even writing an introductory letter to the first edition of the *Misanthrope* (1667), in which he concluded that he found the comedy "all the more admirable for its hero's being its butt without becoming too ridiculous, and that he makes the *honnêtes gens* laugh without cracking dreary and low jokes, as one has become accustomed to in comic plays. Those of [the *Misanthrope's*] kind seem more entertaining, even if one laughs at them less loud . . . they cause continuous laughter in the soul *[elles font continuellement rire dans l'âme].*" Indeed, at one of Molière's opening nights that was proving to be a failure, someone called out from the audience: "Courage, Molière, c'est la vraie comédie!" And highly polished, refined, concentrated, and stylized as it is, the *Misanthrope* is also *la vraie vie.*

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STEPHEN FARBER

The Hausfrau, the Ugly Duckling, and the Funny Lady

SINCE I WROTE MY LAST ESSAY on the vanishing screen heroine (Winter 1974–75), a few new movies with major female roles—including *A Free Woman* from Germany, Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*, and two American pictures, *A Woman Under the Influence* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More*—have opened to extraordinary acclaim from critics and feminists. It would be pleasant to report that the gloomy summary of my last article is no longer relevant, but it would be false. In their eagerness to encourage *any* attempts to deal with women, critics have misinterpreted and overrated these new films. All of them have virtues—chiefly in their performances—but audiences who go to them expecting to see a breakthrough in the screen portrayal of women will be surprised and disappointed by their conventionality.

For example, Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* has been extravagantly praised for its enlightened sexual attitudes, and while the film is undeniably sympathetic to a woman's problems, it is also surprisingly narrow in its view of women's potential. The film may have disarmed people because it is almost the only current movie with a professional woman as its protagonist: Marianne (Liv Ullmann) is a divorce lawyer. But her career doesn't provide her with an identity; she admits that she went into law merely because it was her father's profession, and she feels no commitment to her work. More important, the intelligence that she must have to survive in her profession seems to vanish when she leaves the office. At home Marianne is nothing more than a loyal, contented housewife who lives in the shadow of her husband and falls apart when he leaves her for another woman.

One might argue that Bergman *intends* to show the docility required of women, even intelligent professionals, in Western society. It is true that after her "perfect" marriage breaks up, Marianne begins a painful process of self-analysis and comes to realize how thoroughly she has been conditioned and programmed to be passive. At this point, about halfway through the movie, we expect to see a transformation in Marianne. Shaken out of her complacency, she has a chance to explore resources and talents that lay dormant during her marriage.

However, that transformation never really takes place. The only liberation that Marianne experiences is sexual; she admits for the first time what a strong, demanding sexual nature she has, and she becomes more aggressive in seeking sexual gratification. Isn't this a very traditional—and rather demeaning—vision of women's capabilities? Marianne's husband Johan (Erland Josephson) is a scientist, a failed poet, a man of talent

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who never quite realized his youthful promise and who is now suffering from a spiritual *angst* that the commonsensical, unimaginative Marianne seems incapable of comprehending. As Johan tells her, "You never were very perceptive." By contrasting Johan's spiritual and intellectual yearnings to Marianne's stubborn practicality and sexual emancipation, Bergman disparages her just as ruthlessly as her society has.

Perhaps Bergman's original television version of *Scenes from a Marriage*—almost twice as long as the theatrical version released in the United States—was more complex. Or it may be that the casting of Liv Ullmann affected Bergman's characterization of Marianne, for there are two other women with small parts in the film—an embittered Albee-like wife played by Bibi Andersson, and a research scientist played by Gunnel Lindblom—who do seem to have some of the dimensions that Marianne lacks. Liv Ullmann is a beautiful woman and a fine actress, but over the last several years it has become clear that her range is actually rather limited. Most of her roles have been variations on the same character—the simple, level-headed peasant earth mother. Pauline Kael has described Ullmann, a little harshly but not inaccurately, as a "Hausfrau"; she seems slightly stolid, even bovine, in *Scenes from a Marriage*. Is she the intellectual's ideal woman because she is so completely non-threatening? Feminine, sensual, maternal, Ullmann does not violate the traditional image of woman. Bibi Andersson can also be sensual, feminine, touchingly vulnerable, but she has a different kind of strength, which encompasses unexpected flashes of anger and cruelty; she conveys supreme power and authority. In Andersson's one electrifying scene in *Scenes from a Marriage*, her husband sardonically calls her a business*man* and a brilliant artist—talents that Liv Ullmann never suggests. We believe that Bibi Andersson is capable of anything; Liv Ullmann does not have the same ability to astonish us.

In some of his earlier films Bergman created women characters of richness and complexity, but in *Scenes from a Marriage* he is unable to imagine Marianne's inner life; her secrets elude him, and for all the skill of Liv Ullmann's acting, Marianne remains a flat, prosaic, predictable character. This failure in characterizing women is magnified in several recent American films.

In *Husbands* John Cassavetes examined the anxieties of middle-aged men; in *A Woman Under the Influence* he has tried to see the tensions of marriage from the woman's point of view. He tackles a very fashionable, explosive subject—women and madness—in his familiar quasi-documentary, improvisatory style. Unfortunately, Cassavetes' *cinema vérité* approach is wrong for this kind of story; he can record the heroine's irrational behavior, but he is not enough of a dramatist to provide the necessary background and motivation. From the very first moment we see her, Mabel Longhetti (Gena Rowlands) is out of control, making faces and talking to herself, going to pick up a strange man at a bar, then fighting him off when he responds to her advances. Cassavetes offers only a few superficial hints of what drove her to this point: The loudmouth husband,

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his insensitive cronies, the hyperactive brood of kids, the nagging mother-in-law, and the creepy family doctor are characters from a Blondie cartoon or an "I Love Lucy" show; these scenes from a lower middle class marriage are noisy and frenetic, but cliched and one-dimensional. Is Cassavetes saying that the ordinary pressures of being a housewife can drive a woman crazy? A lot of women endure similar pressures and retain their sanity; some of them even fight back and win a few victories. We need to know more about the seeds of madness *within* Mabel, the sources of her vulnerability.

Feminists who want to see Mabel as representative of all oppressed women might argue that she has lost her bearings because she never developed an identity of her own. At one point she pleads with her husband, "Tell me what you want me to be . . . I can be anything." Later she confides to her children, "I never did anything in my whole life except make you guys." But if we are to conclude that this lack of self-esteem has destroyed her, we must first be convinced that she has untapped resources, unrealized potential. Unfortunately, since we never see Mabel before her breakdown, we cannot begin to guess what needs she might have that are stifled by the tiresome routines of marriage and motherhood. The film leaves too many unanswered questions to qualify as a searching study of female suffering and madness.

In fact, *A Woman Under the Influence* confuses the issues by providing an incongruously happy ending. On the evening of Mabel's return from six months in a mental hospital, she tries to slash her wrists when she sees the same family bickering that she fled beginning all over again. But then her children and husband affirm their love for her, and the movie ends on a note of reconciliation and hope. After putting the kids to bed, she and her husband clean up the kitchen and the bedroom; this homely domestic scene is apparently meant to suggest the underlying strength of their marriage. The final sequence is very well directed, but it contradicts everything else in the film. If a simple declaration of love can heal Mabel's wounds, it is hard to believe that her anguish was very profound to begin with.

Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More is a slicker Hollywood comedy, taken from a more artificial, highly structured script by Robert Getchell. However, since it was directed by Martin Scorsese, the talented dynamo who made *Mean Streets*, the film has a raw energy that shatters some of the script's contrivances. Unlike Mabel Longhetti, Ellen Burstyn's Alice Graham is a survivor, a woman with an enterprising spirit and a resilient sense of humor. When her husband is killed in an accident, she takes her twelve-year-old son and goes off in pursuit of the singing career that she abandoned for marriage.

The premise is intriguing, but despite some pungent scenes, and all-around fine performances, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More* cannot be taken very seriously as a study of a contemporary woman. As in *Scenes from a Marriage* and *A Woman Under the Influence*, the heroine's limited potential radically limits the scope of the film. At first Alice seems determined to

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make it on her own, but in the end, after a few crummy jobs as a barroom singer and waitress, she decides to settle down with Kris Kristofferson, a tranquil, warm-hearted Arizona rancher. Although she plans to continue with her singing career, she gives up her dream of returning to Monterey, the town where she started out as a singer. Some women have criticized the ending as a copout, but that misses the point; the whole movie is a copout because Alice's career ambitions are so unrealistic to begin with. She has no real singing talent; her obsession with singing springs from a childhood infatuation with Alice Faye, and she refuses to grow up.

The film might have been more interesting if Alice had come to realize the absurdity of her singing career, and then readjusted her aspirations and set out to find a career that would make use of her real strengths. But the film poses only two alternatives for Alice—pursuing a hopeless singing career, or settling down with a good man. The choice is an artificial one, unfairly restricted. The last shot is pure Hollywood schmaltz: As Alice tells her son that they will not be moving to Monterey, they pass a bar called "Monterey"; her dream is closer to home than she knew. The movie begins with a parody of *The Wizard of Oz,* but ends by reaffirming the same cloying message; Alice is like a grown-up Dorothy discovering that the land of Oz is right in her own back yard. The film-makers are patting Alice on the head and telling her not to expect too much; their condescension insults women with more complicated aspirations.

Both *A Woman Under the Influence* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More* are about uneducated working-class women, and perhaps the characters' inarticulateness can be explained in terms of their impoverished social milieu. No such justification is possible in the case of *Sheila Levine Is Dead and Living in New York,* which focuses on a college graduate in the big city. Gail Parent's book was a shallow but fitfully amusing series of skits satirizing the Jewish girl's obsession with marriage, and the agony of being thirty and still single in New York. The screenplay by Parent and Kenny Solms retains little from the book except the title; the black comedy is gone, and the film has become a simple love story, a sentimental celebration of the redemptive power of marriage.

The first problem with the movie—the insurmountable problem—is that it is impossible to believe in Sheila Levine as a young woman living in 1975. Sheila (played by Jeannie Berlin) is meant to be a descendant of all the sensitive ugly duckling heroines of American literature and films—the klutz with a heart of gold. The tone is set very early. Sheila has met Sam (Roy Scheider), a doctor, at a singles bar, and he has taken her back to his one-room apartment where he is trying to maneuver her into bed. During the seduction Sheila is such a buffoon that she cannot even get her coat off, and when she finally comes to bed, she is still carrying her purse; the audience's hyena laughter at her gaucherie is not the warm laughter of recognition, but a colder kind of derision. However, Sheila's post-coital ecstasy is more bizarre than her initial clumsiness. As she and Sam are lying in bed, she tells him how relieved she feels to have finally discovered the joy of loving and being loved. The astonished Sam demurs: "We both just

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wanted to get laid." Although Sheila runs out in tears, it is hard to sympathize with her disillusionment. The idea that a big-city girl today, after four years of college, could believe that a one-night stand is synonymous with "love," is mind-boggling. To call her naive would be generous; she seems positively retarded.

From that point on Sheila continues to make a fool of herself over Sam, though he rejects her three separate times and eventually gets engaged to her roommate. In the most excruciating scene she dresses up like a caricature of a Vogue model, and throws herself at the embarrassed, unresponsive Sam. Sheila's mortification is painful to watch, and we are hoping that she will develop enough self-respect to overcome her infatuation. Unfortunately, director Sidney J. Furie expects us to be rooting for Sheila and Sam to get together, and they finally do, when Sam apologizes and—in a ludicrous confessional scene—explains that his insecurity with women has its roots in a traumatic game of "Spin the bottle" he played as a child. By the time Sam capitulates, he has proved to be so insensitive that the "happy ending" has a distinctly sour taste.

The novel *Sheila Levine* ended with an attempted suicide; the movie ends with a proposal, and it's intended to be an exultant, heart-warming finale. In this movie, as in movies of the thirties, marriage is considered an absolute good in itself, the answer to a woman's dreams. It is true that Sheila has a job with a children's record company; but the name of the company, WA WA Records, suggests that the film-makers do not exactly take her job seriously. When she is first hired, Sheila participates in the recording sessions as a singing squirrel. Later, however, she comes up with an idea for a new album in which adults will describe their most embarrassing childhood experiences in order to help children put some of their anxieties in perspective. The head of the company is delighted with her suggestion, and Sheila becomes a record producer. This might be interpreted as a victory for career women, but I think it is a distinctly double-edged triumph. The film's assumption is that female creativity is limited to the field of teaching children. If this were in fact the only type of work that women wanted, all men would be in favor of sexual equality; the threat arises when women want to move into the same jobs and the same creative areas that men now dominate. *Sheila Levine* presents a more comforting vision of Women's Liberation; it perpetuates the old stereotypes of a woman's maternal nature.

Because of Jeannie Berlin's affecting performance, some people may be seduced by the movie's synthetic romanticism. In a way *Sheila Levine* trades on the basic appeal of many Hollywood soap operas; it is an updated version of the Cinderella story—the saga of a lonely ugly duckling who finally triumphs over her beautiful stepsisters and wins her Prince Charming. It is interesting that *A Woman Under the Influence*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More*, and *Sheila Levine* all end with an affirmation of love and marriage; they present love as the ultimate solution to all dilemmas, a woman's noblest aspiration. Hollywood has always merchandised romance; the new movies are selling the same lies in a more realistic-

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looking package. The emphasis on romance in these films is a way of keeping women in their place.

Fortunately, I can end this grim two-part survey of women in film on a positive note. *Funny Lady*, the gaudy, expensive sequel to *Funny Girl*, with Barbra Streisand repeating her impersonation of Fanny Brice, turns out to be not just a very spirited musical, expertly directed by Herbert Ross, but also the first grown-up romantic comedy to come out of Hollywood in years. No one would call *Funny Lady* a work of film art, but it is in the nature of movies to confound the distinction between art and entertainment; in any case this bright Hollywood extravaganza strikes me as a more interesting film about women—and men—than *Scenes from a Marriage*.

Streisand always has a strong presence on screen, but perhaps because of her desire to pander to her army of fans, she has usually been unwilling to attempt very interesting roles. In *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *On A Clear Day You Can See Forever*, *What's Up, Doc?* and *For Pete's Sake*, she played the same adorable kook, brassy and aggressive, but too insistently zany to take seriously. Her best *character* was in her first movie, *Funny Girl*. As Fanny Brice she was able to play a talented woman with a sense of self-irony that undercut all the romantic myths glorified by popular culture. Unfortunately, the movie itself, focussing on Fanny's doomed love for shady gambler Nicky Arnstein, ended by enshrining the romantic cliches that Streisand intuitively mocked. In *Funny Lady* she gets a chance to extend and deepen her characterization, and to bury those romantic cliches once and for all. The movie has derivative passages and awkward stretches, but it sustains interest because the characters of Fanny Brice and her second husband Billy Rose are so perceptively drawn (by writers Jay Presson Allen and Arnold Schulman) and so vividly played by Streisand and James Caan. Their relationship recalls the lively sexual battles of Tracy and Hepburn (in *Adam's Rib* or *Pat and Mike*); it is a genuine give-and-take, a contest between equals which ends as it began, in a draw.

When the movie opens, Fanny Brice is at the peak of her success as a Ziegfeld star, absolutely confident of her talent and her power. In her first scenes with the hustling young impresario Billy Rose she is sarcastic and imperious, amused by his impudence, but impatient with his amateurishness. She senses that he can do something for her; his energy helps to revitalize her career during the Depression, though she is much more knowledgeable about the theater, and she gives him an education in show business that he will find invaluable. They are collaborators before they ever become lovers.

Unlike many Hollywood romances, *Funny Lady* does not bleat about the "mystery" of love. We can see exactly what draws Fanny and Billy together—a no-nonsense approach to life, and an irrepressible show-biz instinct that turns every confrontation into a theatrical performance. Even when they are fighting, they admire each other's spirit. Fanny can be herself with Billy, and since he is an unpretentious con man, he finds her earthbound humor exhilarating. In a way it seems to be a perfect match,

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but Fanny is still yearning for her first husband Nicky Arnstein; even after she marries Billy, she cannot forget the more intense and irrational passion she felt for Nick. Although Omar Sharif's colorless performance is the weakest element in *Funny Lady*, we can understand Nick's appeal for Fanny; he embodies the glamour and elegance that she never dreamed she could attain. Billy Rose, the slob with ashes on his tuxedo, cannot possibly match that romantic ideal, and by the time Fanny realizes that he offers her something more meaningful, he has grown tired of waiting.

The pathos of the film is in this sense of lost opportunity. The romance of Fanny and Billy is affecting because it is so logical and at the same time so uncharacteristic of Hollywood romance. Both characters are unpredictable and appealing. James Caan may not look much like the real Billy Rose, but he captures the sleazy charm and boundless energy of a man who seems to have travelled from the slums to the spotlight without ever losing his rude streetboy manner. Caan is an actor of tremendous vitality and easy masculine charisma, but in *Funny Lady* he reveals a more vulnerable quality that makes this his richest performance. The mixture of crudeness and shyness constantly thwarts expectations. Offering Fanny an engagement ring, Billy blurts out, "I paid retail." Yet when she accepts his proposal, all his assurance vanishes; he cannot quite believe that the princess would marry a toad.

Funny Lady was written by a woman, and that may account for some of the unexpected insights. Jay Presson Allen undercuts the macho mystique by revealing Billy's false bravado, the hurt, insecure boy beneath his belligerent he-man exterior. The character seems more fully human—less of a comic book hero—than almost any male character in recent American films; Caan's performance illuminates the tensions. And for perhaps the first time, Streisand is willing to show her strength without losing her nerve and turning cute; paradoxically, she also has more warmth than ever before. The crucial point is that Jay Allen respects the character. Allen can make fun of Fanny's nutty personal quirks without demeaning her. The relationship of Fanny and her romantic idol Nicky Arnstein is similar to the masochistic relationship of Sheila Levine and her dream doctor, but the difference is that Fanny eventually realizes how insensitive Nick is and how foolishly she has pursued him, and she walks out on him without looking back. When she returns to Billy and finds him in bed with his swimming star Eleanor Holm, she isn't even crushed by that; she retains her sense of humor. Fanny has learned that she can survive on her own, and there is nothing tragic about her isolation. In the final scene, ten years after her second divorce, she's doing fine; she has a few regrets, but she is incapable of self-pity. *Funny Lady* may be the first big-time Hollywood movie which ends with a career woman alone and happy. The last shot is of Fanny looking at herself in the mirror and smiling at what she sees; the soundtrack blasts out a reprise of her song, "Let's Hear It For Me."

Admittedly *Funny Lady* is a special case, and I wouldn't want to draw any overly optimistic conclusions about women in film based on this one

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movie. Streisand is such a big superstar that she can play powerful roles denied to other actresses; and since *Funny Lady* is a biography of a woman who was a huge success in her own right, it doesn't take great courage to portray her sympathetically. Still, it might have been played differently—as one more maudlin drama of heartbreak behind the footlights. The film is uneven, alternately bloated and incisive, cliched and original, saccharine and witty. But there is a core of truth in the relationship of the two central characters, and the electricity between the stars drives the movie forward. *Funny Lady* is enormously entertaining, partly because it is a new kind of movie romance—mature and sophisticated, distinctly contemporary in feeling. Sometimes a successful commercial movie can have a greater influence than a more sober work of art. The status of women in films remains depressing, but maybe a little less depressing now that a large public is supporting a movie that actually reflects changing attitudes toward men and women.

ROBERT S. CLARK

Music Chronicle

HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S Charles Eliot Norton chair of poetry has held musicians as well as writers over the fifty years since its establishment, among them Hindemith, Stravinsky, Copland, Sessions and Chávez, and in 1973 Leonard Bernstein was appointed to fill it. The resulting lectures, given in Cambridge, Mass., during October and November of that year, and titled "The Unanswered Question" (after Charles Ives's orchestral work), were recorded by Columbia Records and have recently been released, accompanied by performances of some of the music—Mozart's Symphony No. 40, Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony, the Ives work, and other pieces by Berlioz, Mahler, Debussy, Stravinsky, and so forth—touched upon in the lectures. The six albums[1] contain seventeen discs—at once a massive monument to midcentury America's most comprehensive and highly visible musical career and an act of unexampled gratitude on the part of the recording company that, many profitable years ago,

[1] LEONARD BERNSTEIN AT HARVARD. The Norton Lectures 1973: "The Unanswered Question." Volume I: "Musical Phonology," Columbia M2X 33014 $10.98; Volume II: "Musical Syntax," M2X 33017 $10.98; Volume III: "Musical Semantics," M3X 33020 $13.98; Volume IV: "The Delights and Dangers of Ambiguity," M3X 33024 $13.98; Volume V: "The Twentieth Century Crisis," M3X 33028 $13.98; Volume VI: "The Poetry of Earth," M4X 33032 $16.98.

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hitched its wagon firmly to this ascending superstar. The significance of this set is neither musical—all of the performances but one, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, have been released previously—nor commercial—how many consumers, even Bernstein idolators, will shell out what it takes to hear his musico-philosophical ramble over twenty-some record sides? Its significance is ceremonial instead: I do not intend to impugn Bernstein's achievement here when I say that this release resembles an occasion on which the loyal employees bestow on the boss a portrait of himself to mark the firm's first million-dollar bottom line. Still, no one willing to stick with it will come away from this set without enlightenment. Bernstein has sharpened his pedagogical skills with years of Young People's Concerts and televised exegesis of the classics, and on the present occasion, furthermore, has an intellectual axe to grind.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Bernstein's twenty-odd-year presence in our musical midst has been his unabashed willingness to damn conventional expectations and tackle anything. That spirit animates the Norton Lectures. Charles Ives's unanswered question is nothing less than "whither music?" It is a large issue, surely, and worthy of Bernstein's attention, but as a subject for a series of lectures it is humdrum. The typical adventurousness comes in with the "interdisciplinary" method of exploring the question: he borrows the linguistic theories and terminology of Noam Chomsky to shed light on his understanding of the nature of music and its origins in acoustical phenomena. Chomsky's postulation of an "innate grammatical competence" in all human beings, identical in spite of the parochial forms language takes in differing cultures, is paralleled, in Bernstein's view, by a "worldwide inborn musical grammar." (Except where I specify, all the words in quotation marks are Bernstein's.) He asserts that there are cognate processes in both music and language that are discoverable by linguistic method; all that is needed, he thinks, is a group of analogous terms.

From Chomsky he takes the key words that figure in the subtitles of the first three of the lectures. "Musical phonology" is based upon the scale, a group of "phonemes" that are also "morphemes"—meaningful phonemes—because of their acoustical relationship in the overtone or harmonic series. Bernstein demonstrates at the piano how the pentatonic (five-note) scale and the standard Western diatonic scale are derived from the overtone series; how a basic tone (the tonic, in harmonic language) and the fifth above it (dominant), fourth (subdominant) and other tones are related; and how these harmonic relationships, from Bach to Beethoven and beyond, exacted a strong "diatonic containment of chromaticism," of—and these quotation marks are mine—the "white keys" in an octave over the "black." "Musical syntax," the title of the second lecture, is in Bernstein's definition the means of linking musical morphemes into statements, founded on simple techniques of rhythmic, harmonic, and motivic repetition and symmetry. But obviously suggestion and shorthand are as frequent in music as in language, and here Bernstein draws upon the Chomskian theory of "transformational grammar": such

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concepts as "deletion," "embedding," and "permutation" explain how complex musical structures grow out of basic processes. He constructs a four-part scheme, parallel to Chomsky's linguistic diagram of the intuitive refinement of primitive speech elements into underlying strings of meaning ("deep structure") and thence into prose ("surface structure") and finally poetry ("super-surface structure"). For music the elements of phonology become underlying strings of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic relationships and from there evolve a "deep structure"—a musical "prose" whose definition remains a bit vague—and finally a "surface structure," the musical score itself and the equivalent of poetry on the Chomsky ladder.

"Musical semantics" is the theme of the third lecture, and here the argument begins to take on historical implications. Bernstein gets started by asserting that music has meanings—a cliché, to be sure, but a very unfashionable opinion in the intellectual climate that has prevailed in the lofty vicinity of the Norton Chair and its like for several decades. (The attentive listener to these recordings might almost think that, as Bernstein makes this assertion, he hears the dismissive snort of the shade of Igor Stravinsky, a previous occupant of the seat.) "Music has intrinsic meanings . . . not related to feelings or moods, . . . generated by a constant stream of metaphors which are all forms of poetic transformation. [Music] names the unnameable, communicates the unknowable . . ." In short, music is expressive, even if it is impossible to say of what.

And it has been the composers' search, ever since Beethoven, for greater and greater expressiveness that has led to what Bernstein deems the twentieth-century crisis, the suspicion of an impending dead-end that prompted Ives's unanswered question. For the nineteenth century sought expressivity by deliberately introducing ambiguity into rhythm, harmony, and phrase, by a gradual weakening of the "diatonic containment of chromaticism." He points to structural ambiguity in Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony, in a passage in which the textural pattern created by orchestrational contrasts contradicts the harmonic movement, to rhythmic ambiguity in Schumann, and to harmonic ambiguity in Wagner (the opening bars of the *Tristan und Isolde* Prelude, of course). By the time he reaches Mahler—for Bernstein a Janus-like figure and a seer—ambiguity has all but destroyed diatonicism. In a few measures of the Adagietto of Mahler's Fifth Symphony he finds syntactical ambiguities in the absence of a clear beat and the fundamental note (F) of the tonic triad—"we're not sure our key is going to be F Major." But Mahler was different—he sensed the coming crisis. As the lecturer apotheosizes Mahler and tells us that in the Finale of that composer's Ninth Symphony we can hear ruminations on "the death of tonality and the death of society," a stale air of apocalypse-mongering (thickened along the way by references to our century's being the first "faced with the threat of global extinction" and likening it to "a shy frightened child, adrift in a shaky universe, living under the constant threat of mummy and daddy about to divorce or die") settles over the proceedings for a time. But it does give

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Columbia the excuse to include the beautiful Finale movement in the set, well played by Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic.

Fortunately Bernstein dispels this mood by moving vigorously into twentieth-century music and providing perhaps his most scintillating moments in dissecting the two giants of received opinion, Schoenberg and Stravinsky. The first isn't a giant, in his view, and knew it. Clearly understanding the threat of rampant tonal ambiguity, Schoenberg attempted to codify the serial equality of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale as a substitute for tonality. But "the new musical rules of Schoenberg are not based on innate awareness, on the intuition of tonal relationships." In spite of his attempt to abandon tonality, a "tonal feeling haunted Schoenberg's music." Instead of a new phonology, what Schoenberg willed the music of our century is another ambiguity: "the planned antitonal function of the twelve-tone row" contradicts "the inevitable tonal harmonic implications that innately reside in it, do what you will." But this is an "ambiguity too huge to be grasped," one that "cannot produce an aesthetically positive response." Furthermore, Schoenberg himself came finally to deny the possibility of atonality—"and we should learn from him."

Igor Stravinsky, on the other hand, represents "resuscitation" for Bernstein. The neoclassicism of Stravinsky and the Parisian-American movement that took shape in his shadow was twentieth-century music's "saving grace," their polytonality, polyrhythm, dry wit, and borrowings from popular and folk idioms "shots in the arm for tonality." But it didn't last; neoclassicism retreated under the disapproving gaze of total serialism, which dominated the postwar era. By the mid-sixties, Bernstein feels, things looked grim indeed: "Stravinsky had all but died . . . having converted to serialism in the fifties," and the younger composers were trapped in arid formulas. Now, in 1975, from the perspective of the Norton Chair, the outlook is more sanguine: we are witnessing "a new era of fresh air and fun" and "a reacceptance of tonality."

The central thesis of these lectures—what might be called the inevitability of tonality—has always been with us, but has been gathering strength for a decade or two, the turning point being, perhaps, the publication in 1955 of Henry Pleasants' book *The Agony of Modern Music*. I am not going to take sides here; I will confine myself to Bernstein's fleshing out of the thesis. It is captivating, entertaining, irritating, wide-ranging, imaginative—everything one would expect a typical Bernstein undertaking to be—and just a little short of totally persuasive. He finds in Chomsky's "innate grammatical competence" a correspondence to the "worldwide musical grammar" that has "long haunted" him, but his attempt to locate that grammar in the twelve notes of the tempered Western scale will not wash. Whatever the mathematical relationships between these twelve notes, these "twelve universals" as Bernstein once refers to them, they are only one combination in a multitude of possibilities, as the scales of other musical cultures show. The hierarchy of tonal relationships and the sensed "closeness" and "distance" of intervals that are the prin-

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cipal features of Western tonality spring from cultural conditioning as much as from "innateness." So what Bernstein ends up talking about is not music pure and simple, but Western music. And as valuable as some of his insights are, the listener might legitimately wonder whether the Chomskian terminology is really much help along about the middle of the second lecture, when several of the correspondences between spoken language and music begin to come unstuck. In particular, the terms "transformation" and "ambiguity" undergo sea changes in meaning as the argument progresses. To his credit, Bernstein acknowledges the inexactness of some of these correspondences. But might not conventional terms of musical analysis have produced equally illuminating results, and less underbrush? Early on, Bernstein says he is seeking "a way of speaking about music with intelligent but non-professional music lovers who don't know a stretto from a diminished fifth." I doubt Chomsky's linguistic terms point that way. The "interdisciplinary" approach is, finally, questionable at best and adventitious at worst.

Yet one does not expect intellectual rigor from Bernstein. As the album covers clearly show, this set is not about the Norton Chair of Poetry, or music either; it is about Leonard Bernstein, the culture magician who transforms everything he touches into himself. That touch is the burden of the case against him; his restlessness has fragmented his talents, his detractors say, and the greatest of his undeniable gifts may be the gift of gab. But this fails to reduce the stature of the man and his achievements in any important way. Bernstein is an American musical personality, perhaps the most authentic one now active, and it is the encounter with that personality that gives these lectures their value. For anyone with sufficient means to purchase the set without denying himself the direct experience of music, and sufficient curiosity to get through the thirty-four sides of talk and performance, I recommend it. Some will certainly come away disappointed, but more will find themselves hearing the music Bernstein wants them to hear the way he hears it himself—vividly.

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Reviews

VERNON YOUNG

On Looking into Several Homers

THE LATE LAMENTED MAURICE BOWRA was impartial towards the rival beliefs that the poems of Homer were collections of separate lays from many hands; or the work of a single man whose poems were preserved by a guild of bards, the self-styled Sons of Homer or, conceivably, that the epics were created by two individual poets. In one of his many books on the Greek subject, Bowra concluded: "We shall probably never know the right answer. But in the long run it doesn't matter. What matter are the poems, which are works of art based on a long tradition and themselves composed in the latter part of the eighth century B.C. and it is not improper to speak of Homer and by him to mean the poet or poets who composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*."[1] Robert Graves was cocksure that "the Homeridae . . . a family guild of Ionian bards based on Chios, enlarged their ancestor's first short draft of the *Iliad* to twenty-four books and became comprehensively known as 'Homer.' "[2] These earned their livelihood by supplying popular entertainment for Grecian festivals and for Mediterranean courts where Greek was spoken, "from Asia Minor to Sicily," perhaps farther West. In the groves of Academe, Graves's deductions from myth and Ancient History are normally regarded as perverse. The Homer entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1973), for which John Armstrong Davison was responsible, gives credit to Millman Parry and his successors for relating Greek poetry to that of the Serbs and Croats; none to Graves, who has sustained and elaborated the boundaries of comparative analysis. E. V. Rieu[3] has assumed a single author for *Iliad* and *Odyssey* on grounds which would never stand in a court of law. To account for the visible abundance of extended similes in the *Iliad*—as plentiful as mistletoe in a forest of oaks—and for their comparative absence from the *Odyssey*, he explained that the former epic needed such relief from its incessant chronicle of battles on earth and strife on Olympus, whereas the seaborne incidents of the *Odyssey* were sufficiently various to dispense with any aids to interest beyond the narrative itself. Further, in each work the climaxes and turning-points come at the same juncture in ratio to the number of books and the length of the whole. Such demonstrations, plausible as they

[1] *Landmarks in Greek Literature* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966).

[2] *The Anger of Achilles*, Homer's *Iliad* translated by Robert Graves (Cassell, 1960). In Graves's novel, *Homer's Daughter* (1955), a mixture of common sense and witty speculation, he invents, for *The Odyssey*, an authoress, Nausicaa, daughter of Alcinous, who declares: "*The Iliad*, which I admire, is devised by a man for men; this epic, *The Odyssey*, will be devised by a woman for women."

[3] Homer's *Iliad* (Penguin Classics, 1967).

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seem, are no *proof* of single authorship. The Wayfarer who composed the *Odyssey* might reasonably have been obedient to the structure of a precedent form.[4] T. E. Lawrence accepted a single Homer without arguing and penned an immortal sketch of that hypothetical man in the postscript to his prose *Odyssey,* which to my regret I can't at length quote here.[5] Richmond Lattimore, after some hesitation, categorically favors the single-author conviction, leaving the burden of proof to those who disagree! *Why?*[6]

Which of these preferences is held by Robert Fitzgerald, whose 1974 blank-verse translation I'm supposed to be reviewing,[7] I have no idea, since neither this volume nor his *Odyssey* of 1961 (both Anchor-Doubleday) contains an introduction or notes or an index.[8] The knotty question of authorship, on which the "unitarians" have been challenged by the "analysts" has a not unimportant bearing on the style chosen by a translator. E. V. Rieu liked to fancy that Homer had anticipated Plato's Theory of Forms; hence, he will shape his prose to balance the noble and ignoble elements in both stories. Graves, the champion of a hydra-head Homer, plausibly intercuts a prose tale with verse. "A solemn prayer, a divine message, a dirge, or a country song disguised as a simile—they sound all wrong when turned into English prose: just as wrong as when muster-rolls and long, detailed accounts of cooking a meal or harnessing a mule are kept in verse." Difficult to argue: who will not skip most of the *Iliad's* Book Two in any translation? Graves sensibly announces his Catalogue of Ships and The Trojan Order of Battle in rubric, setting off these sections with asterisks as a service to the plain reader. Graves's main text does not wholly justify his claim to have written a "staid prose." His tone veers between the rough commonplace and the belittling, whilst he is unable to resist such bookish rhetoric as "animadversions, in anticipation of, Oh, how can I persuade you to relent?, the teams are equally indistinct, We are fully aware that your divine armor is not available"—etc.

Professor Lattimore's Note on his own translation is the most incredible. Replying (unnecessarily) to Matthew Arnold's demands, Lattimore says he doesn't "think *nobility* is a quality to be striven for; you must write as well as you can, and then see . . . whether the result is noble." No-

[4] Recent scholarship in fact maintains that the division of each epic into twenty-four books was not accomplished before the third century B.C.

[5] The *Odyssey* Limited edition (Walker, Merton & Rogers, 1932). In view of the magnificent prose Lawrence wrote here (in his postscript) and in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* his Homer is curiously sedate—"Wardour Street English" he himself called it.

[6] The *Iliad* (University of Chicago, 1951); paper, 1973. The *Odyssey* (Harper and Row, 1965; Torchbooks, 1968).

[7] THE ILIAD, translated by *Robert Fitzgerald.* Anchor Doubleday. $15.00.

[8] American publishers, like God, never bestow two blessings at the same time. The Richmond Lattimore translations include concise and valuable introductions and a complete glossary of names but both texts are poorly printed for strained eyes. The Fitzgerald books, with no auxiliary material, have Homeric space—wide margins, bold typeface, as clear as a Grecian profile.

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bility *writes itself?* As you think, so will you write! If you think nobly, you will so write; if you think sensuously you will write sensuously—and so forth. Lattimore adds that he "must try to avoid mistranslation, which would be caused by rating the word of my own choice ahead of the word which translates the Greek." By Mars his gauntlet, I thought this had been settled long ago! Madame Dacier's French translation of Homer was regarded as a model of accuracy but in no syllable Homeric. George Chapman scornfully conceived

> how pedantical and absurd an affectation it is in the interpretation of any author . . . to turn him word for word, when (according to Horace and other best lawgivers to translators) it is the part of every knowing and judicial interpreter not to follow the number and order of words but the material things themselves . . . and to clothe and adorn them with . . . such a style and form of oration as are most apt for the language into which they are converted.

And if Chapman's practise fails, for the modern, to ratify his theory, so, I fear, does Lattimore's. To support his fidelity to the Greek text, Lattimore employs a "free" hexameter line; without success, for there is no metre less suited to speakable English than this unmanageable centipede with a compulsive stress of six beats. His imperative forces Lattimore into padding his lines, out of respect for Homer's *metrical necessity,* the use of doublets or formulaic modifiers: in English verse today, a disastrous emulation. Lattimore concludes his Note with the disingenuous belief that he has rendered Homer into his own (Lattimore's) " 'poetical language,' which is mostly the plain English of today." I have no space to argue over that bromide, "the plain English of today," which has been around since Wordsworth. I'll rest content with the assertion that there is no identifiable diction which we can label "the plain English of today"; if there is, Professor Lattimore in his Homer translations cannot be said to have written it.

One of my standard tests of the living voice in Homer is the moment (in the *Odyssey*) when Odysseus, sailing away from Calypso's isle, momentarily loses heart, threatened by tempestuous seas. Translators usually make Odysseus apostrophize fortune in some such exclamation as T. E. Lawrence employs: "Woe is me! Has Zeus let me behold this land only to make me despair?" If this is tepidity itself, Lattimore's is unbelievably gauche. "Ah me unhappy, what in the long outcome will befall me?" (The plain English of today?) Robert Fitzgerald had already in 1961 driven the nail home. "Rag of man that I am, is this the end of me?" On the death of Iphidamus (the *Iliad*) Lattimore is equally maladroit. "So Iphidamus fell there and went into the brazen slumber." Chapman wrote, ". . . and with his wound his timeless death he took/ He fell and slept an iron sleep." That's better but surpassed by Fitzgerald: "Down he dropped into the brazen slumber." Whatever theory he may entertain on the sublime or the realistic, with encouraging frequency Fitzgerald catches the accent of the man and the name of the action. He can sound more properly Elizabethan

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than Chapman: ". . . to fight a man God loves, that's doom, and quickly." "What pleasure can we take in a fine dinner/ when baser matters gain the upper hand?" Alone among translators of the *Odyssey,* he has Achilles in the underworld hail Odysseus as "old knife"—reminiscent of Hector addressing Nestor (in *Troilus and Cressida*): "Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle. . . ."

For the longer stretch we can appropriately cite first E. V. Rieu's version of a sequence in the strenuous Book Eleven of the *Iliad.*

> Many a pair of horses tossed their heads and rattled their empty chariots down the corridors of battle, missing the master hands of the charioteers, while these lay sprawling on the ground, a more enticing spectacle to the vultures than to their wives.

Here is the same in Robert Graves. "So the proud noblemen fell before the High King's red-hot progress, and lay lifeless on the ground—of less use now to their wives than to vultures." That *red-hot progress* is an unfortunate solecism in a valiant trial. Lattimore's, not even a close shave, is a calamity.

> . . . and in many places the strong-necked horses
> rattled their empty chariots along the causeways of battle,
> and longed for their haughty charioteers, who were lying
> along the ground, to delight no longer their wives, but the vultures.[9]

Returning to Chapman, we get, "Thicker fell the Trojans, much more sweet to vultures than their wives," an unusually deft fourteener in his work; yet will anyone question the pre-eminence of Fitzgerald in this instance as well? "These lay on the field/ more lovable to kites than to their wives."

To combine verse with prose or to oppose different measures of verse, one to the other, can bring welcome relief within an epic poem of 15,693 lines (Lattimore's figure). Chapman prefaced each of his books with an Argument (sometimes his own!) in rhymed ten syllable pentameter before launching into those fourteen syllable combers, frequently as cumbersome as they are grandiose. E. V. Rieu sets off his Invocation in a separate italicized paragraph; Graves his in a rhymed stanza, after which he begins his prose text with the disarming simplicity of a camp-fire storyteller. "You wish to know which of the gods originated the quarrel between these Greek princes, and how this happened?" Neither Fitzgerald

[9] This is all the more perplexing because the language of Mr. Lattimore's prose and poetry is exemplary. His "Homecoming group" of poems, first published in THE HUDSON REVIEW, are among notable contemporary variations on a classical theme: Anthony Hecht's "Three Prompters from the Wings"; the Argonaut verses of Ivan Lalic; Peter Davison's "Travelling Among Islands" and his lovely "Calypso."

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nor Lattimore follows these examples. Like Pope they commence without overture—without Pope's assurance, one might add, if without his archaisms. I can't quote all these passages (they are easily referred to) but I can say that except for his first two martial lines,

> Anger be now your song, immortal one,
> Akhilleus' anger, doomed and ruinous,

Fitzgerald's opening strophes are not markedly superior to those of Pope, Rieu or Graves, though they're clearly better than Lattimore's congested introduction:

> Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus
> and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the
> Achaians. . . .

Rieu's "The Wrath of Achilles is my theme" or Graves's jubilant "Sing MOUNTAIN GODDESS sing through me" transcend the locutions of Pope, and "Agamemnon King of Men" (which Rieu and Graves share) is more resounding than Fitzgerald's "the Lord Marshal Agamemnon," just as Pope's "Since great Achilles and Atrides strove" is of sterner stuff than Fitzgerald's "the two men first contending/ broke with one another." Fitzgerald seems to have been nervous at the outset, feeling the need for an initial emphasis of some kind: thus, perhaps, his guarded introduction of rhyme to pepper his call to arms (*carrion/done; quarrel on/ Agamemnon*). From time to time in his translation, Fitzgerald recognizes the need for an internal or explicit rhyme and his finest inspiration acknowledges, consciously or not, the value of Graves's method: he utilizes *rhyme only* for Hermes the Wayfinder, on the few occasions when that congenial spirit is authorized to deliver messages—a beautiful touch that individualizes this most aerial creature among the celestials of Homer. In at least one passage, conspicuously, Fitzgerald's blank verse matches in its own terms the melody of a Graves polemic: in Book 21, when Achilles murders Lykaon and flings him into the river.

Graves (op. cit., p. 299):

> Among the fish, Lycaon, lie!
> Their dainty tongues your blood shall try;
> Nor can Laothoe come near
> To stretch your cold corpse on a bier,
> With shrill lament; for there you go,
> Borne on Scamander's rippling flow
> To the salt bosom of the deep
> Where dogfish hungrily shall leap
> Through turbid waters, quick to tear
> Strips from your white flesh floating there.
>
> So perish every man of Troy!

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Whole squadrons now I will destroy,
Forcing the rest to flee pell-mell
Until I sack her Citadel.
Think not, my foes, that sacrifice
Of bulls, or other rich device—
Such as to toss a chariot-team
Alive into Scamander's stream—
Shall curb my vengeance-hungry blade!
For those who with Patroclus died
When, all too long, I nursed my pride.

Fitzgerald (p. 497):

Nose down there with fishes. In cold blood
They'll kiss your wound and nip your blood away.
Your mother cannot put you on your bed
to mourn you, but Skamander whirling down
will bear you to the sea's broad lap,
where any fish that jumps, breaking a wave,
may dart under the dark wind-shivered water
to nibble white fat of Lykaon. Trojans,
perish in this rout until you reach,
and I behind you slaughtering, reach, the town!
The god-begotten river swiftly flowing
will not save you. Many a bull you've offered,
many a trim-hooved horse thrown in alive
to Xanthus' whirlpools. All the same, you'll die
in blood until I have avenged Patroklos,
paid you back for the death-wounds of Akhaians
cut down near the deep-sea-going ships
far from my eyes.

Graves's verse is impeccable on its own account: in context it conveys a somewhat Georgian decorum incompatible with the bloodthirsty temper of Achilles. Fitzgerald's inflections and modifiers are sanguinary, far more "Homeric": the compounds, *wind-shivered, god-begotten, trim-hooved, deep-sea-going;* the incisive *nip your blood away, nibble white fat, you'll all die in blood:* the alliteration, the assonance and the confident repetion of *until you reach* and *I behind you slaughtering, reach* with its effective double comma-cesura before—*the town.*

I should prefer to leave Fitzgerald's achievement unqualified by further assessment yet I have to acknowledge—reluctantly, for I'm not otherwise an Augustan—that if Fitzgerald's blank verse rises above any recent translation, for dramatic pith and virility, it loses ground in the long run when you read all but the best moments after you have re-read the *Iliad* of Alexander Pope. We know well where Pope is fustian or Good-Queen-Anneish, where he is patently dated. Still and all he is unrivalled for the saltos he performs, for the integrated velocity and the unimpaired resonance of his imperious couplets. Even Chapman pales beside Pope;

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more correctly said, he turns scarlet from the pressure of keeping his sometimes majestic hyperbole from confounding the ear. When posed against Pope, Fitzgerald's score can be heard to comprise with consistency the piano, the violins, the celli and an occasional kettle-drum—but from it French horns, clarinets and flutes are notably absent. A passage of Pope in Book V (11. 375-395) will illustrate as well as any I might select his masterful command of seamless continuity in the depiction of a rapid montage. "The fierce Tydides" hurls a "rocky fragment" at Aeneas, who is killed instantly; but before his body can be molested by the enemy his mother, Aphrodite (or Venus) appears and, throwing about him a protective veil, she carries him to safety, aloft.

> Where to the hip th' inserted thigh unites,
> Full on the Bone the pointed Marble lights;
> Thro' both the tendons broke the rugged Stone,
> And stripp'd the Skin, and crack'd the solid Bone.
> Sunk on his Knees and stagg'ring with his Pains,
> His falling bulk his bended arm sustains;
> Lost in a dizzy Mist the Warrior lies;
> A sudden Cloud comes swimming o'er his Eyes.
> There the brave Chief who mighty Numbers swayed
> Opress'd had sunk to Death's Eternal Shade,
> But Heavn'ly Venus, mindful of the Love
> She bore Anchises in th' Idean Grove,
> His Danger views with Anguish and Despair,
> And guards her Offspring with a Mother's Care.
> About her much-lov'd Son her Arms she throws,
> Her Arms whose Whiteness match the falling Snows.
> Screen'd from the Foe behind her shining Veil,
> The Swords wave harmless, and the Javelins fail:
> Safe thro' the rushing Horse and feather'd Flight
> Of sounding shafts, she bears him from the Fight.

From the carnal to the sublime, from the surgical detail to mortality transfigured, in twenty lines: the first climax, Aeneas felled, does not subordinate the sequel in which, by skillfully enjambed lines, Venus guards, veils and carries to the heavens her son, in an upwardly streamlined trajectory. Fitzgerald has nearly as much difficulty as Lattimore when attempting to describe accurately those broken tendons of Aeneas, as if Gray's *Anatomy* were the object of translation. Lattimore writes: "It smashed the cup-socket and broke the tendons both sides of it;" Fitzgerald—". . . just where/ the hip-bone shifts in what they call the bone-cup,/ crushing this joint with two adjacent tendons." Pope wastes no time. (Nor does Rieu. "He crushed the cup-bone, and he broke both sinews too.") Fitzgerald's whole onslaught lacks impetus and crescendo; it comes to a halt—tersely phrased, to be sure, with:

> Now the great Trojan, fallen on his knees,
> put all his weight on one strong hand

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and leaned against the earth: night veiled his eyes.

But just here the poet ends a stanza, as it were; when he re-commences, the rescue of Aeneas by Aphrodite has the force of an anti-climax or a formulaic contingency and it closes rather lamely, with nothing of Pope's "rushing Horse and feathered Flight," on "Then from the battle heavenward she lifted / her dear son." The reader will infer from my previous quotations that this is an exceptional declivity in Fitzgerald's narrative. To redress the balance he will note especially the translator's deft transcription of similes in the opening pages of Book 17; the burning-town images (p. 442); Aineias on Words (p. 481) and Akhilleus' terrible scorn of the dying Hektor (p. 526): "Beg me no beggary by soul or parents, / whining dog!. . . ." (Achilles is not *my* hero!)

Summarizing the character of Pope's Homer, the editors of the Twickenham edition appropriately remark: "Extending the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* beyond good poetry and criticism to legislate ordered values to every aspect of his threatened society, Pope made translation a political act."[10] To relate the person or event to the universal cause was certainly Pope's intention and seldom, in the *Iliad,* did he fail to fulfill it; it is the source of his power and the reason for his diminished reputation today. His will to elevation and his unsleeping eye for the political analogy are unwelcome to the contemporaries of Robert Fitzgerald who care only for political analogies they can apply in their own neighborhood. Like Chapman's, Pope's *Iliad* spoke to a nation, even as Homer's original had done—and forever after, it seems, for all nations (at least of the Mediterranean and the West).[11] Today, no poet can do likewise. "The wind has changed and we have lost our public," said Auden for all poets. From a converted *Iliad* the most we can expect now is that therein the characters shall speak plausibly to one another. The twentieth century would like to have its own Homer, as durable as Pope's, unencased by the pentameter couplet.

It is too late. Robinson Jeffers is probably the only poet of our time who could have given us a completely satisfying Homer; if not an *Iliad,* for he was too little interested in the City of Man, an *Odyssey* of surge and thunder and "the mounded eyeball of ocean." We must remain content with the comparative adventure: with reading alternately, fortified by Walter Ker, T. B. L. Webster and Bowra, sequences from Pope, Rieu and Graves, while gratefully discovering that Professor Fitzgerald's verse translation is the best in English *since* Pope's. What the twenty-first century will make of it, who would foretell?

> What's past and what's to come is strewed with husks
> And formless ruin of oblivion.

[10] Introduction to Vol. VII of Poems of Alexander Pope, p. ccxxi, edited by Maynard Mack and others (Methuen and Yale, 1967).

[11] "The shattered *Iliad* yet makes a masterpiece; while the *Odyssey* by its ease and interest remains the oldest book worth reading for its story and the first novel of Europe" (T. E Lawrence).

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SONYA RUDIKOFF

Psychoanalysis and Feminism

IF ANYONE WONDERS how it came about that America, of all the advanced nations of the Western world, should have been the one to welcome the new theory of psychoanalysis, surely part of the reason would involve the nation's very brief existence. In England and France, both neurology and psychiatry had had a long history of important professional achievement, and no one was so receptive there. Perhaps too, in those older societies, with their complex traditions and fuller social experience, there was no need to adopt psychoanalysis in what came to be a peculiarly American way—as morally normative, as a philosophy of life, a system of belief. The very society which was beginning to disintegrate in England, and would reach its final decay and disappearance with the First World War,[1] had never really existed in any depth in the new United States. As Hawthorne, and then James, observed, there was no peasantry, no hereditary class, no ancient culture, no monuments or church or continuous life, none of the thick texture of social history which gave personal life a definitive stamp. Perhaps the new thought from Vienna could be assimilated with less difficulty in a largely unfurnished psychic landscape.

William James knew of Freud's work in the early 1890's; later, thoughtful Americans would be among Freud's most enthusiastic, loyal, and wealthy supporters. And from the beginning these educated citizens were interested in new thought, and all through the nineteenth century every sort of innovative, unprecedented, or evangelical idea could almost be guaranteed a hearing and a following. By now, of course, it is not only in advanced circles that psychoanalysis is so widely accepted. If at first educated people welcomed the theories as they welcomed Darwin's—that is, as of enormous significance in a specific discipline, and of unknown cultural and philosophical importance—gradually, Freudian ideas precipitated, in Auden's familiar and accurate phrase, "a whole climate of opinion." Art, politics, literature, child-rearing, the family, the school, the law, the university, the clergy, industry, labor, the mass media—it is difficult to think of many aspects of American life which were not extensively and profoundly affected by that loose agglomeration of theory and homily known as psychoanalysis.

Freud himself and the early analysts were dissidents, marginal people, and Freud repeatedly insisted that psychoanalysis was not a *Weltanschauung* but a scientific discipline. America did not heed him on this, nor on much else, and as psychoanalysis spread in influence and popularity, it became assimilated to homely American pieties of work, health, self-help, and the prudent pursuit of self-interest. What began as an arcane revolutionary science in an atmosphere of liberation became, by the

[1] Cf. Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973).

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Forties and Fifties, a bureaucracy of belief that reinforced social equilibrium and seemingly opposed social change, encouraging a kind of sophisticated conformity. Anyone who saw the reality principle as closely identified in this system of belief with the current state of American society was not mistaken. That was certainly an implication to be drawn from the public pronouncements and private practice of psychoanalysts. Much of the popular moralistic imperative was conveyed through associated disciplines such as psychology, and throughout the culture by the mass media.

Then, in the Sixties, when the civil rights movement, the peace movement, and other such movements burst upon public consciousness, it was not entirely surprising to find psychoanalysis employed for belligerent purposes, as its vocabularies were introduced into a seeming defense of the status quo,[2] or attack upon it (as in Marcuse's work). The polemical use of psychoanalytic insights even became somewhat repellent, as the actual circumstances of the Vietnam War and the racial battles were revealed in growing brutality; a psychology of rebellion simply could not replace an analysis of social change. Racism, civil rights, anti-war actions, all have their psychology, certainly, but there were clear moral questions involved. Repeatedly, the same moral inadequacy and irrelevance characterized the psychological analysis of other events in the Sixties, because the psychology of individual participants, even of large numbers of participants, seemed to bear very little relation to the moral or material character of the objective situation. Blacks *were* disenfranchised, there really *was* an ugly unjust war, the universities *were* bureaucratized, the youth cohort in the population *was* larger and more alienated than ever before, and so on. The matter is extremely complex, and it would be hard to say when or in response to what events the psychological contribution to social and political understanding came to seem to many people entirely beside the point.

In relation to one of these movements, feminism, psychoanalysis has had a similar history. The difference is that although the civil rights movement and the peace movement may have had a psychological dimension, their goals and the contents of their ideologies were less closely related to the subjects of psychoanalysis than were the goals of feminism. And, as the polemical literature of radical feminism has made clear, psychoanalysis seems to be part of the condition of women that demands liberation: psychoanalytic ideas about women's sexuality, women's place in society, women's nature, and all the rest. Disinterested observers were amazed when Freud's effigy was strung up as the enemy in feminist demonstrations—Freud, the great liberator???!!! It was of course the various hypotheses of female inferiority presumably asserted by psychoanalysis that provoked radical feminist attack and have cast Freud and the Freudians in an inimical role. Feminists would have no reason to be especially interested in psychoanalytic theories of feminine development were it not for the seeming reinforcement psychoanalysis gave to social discrimination. In an atmosphere of egalitarian beliefs, it

[2] Cf. the speeches of Spiro Agnew, especially the use of the idea of "instant gratification," for a vulgar instance. There were countless others of lesser notoriety.

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was inevitable that any theories which seemed to countenance the historical inequality of women would not escape notice. Perhaps it was inevitable too because radical feminism has been a movement of young educated women, and, clearly, educated women would be familiar with the assumptions of psychoanalytic thought and sensitive to implications of its theories.

The massive attack on Freud and psychoanalysis during the Sixties was at first dismissed by thoughtful people as a kind of craziness, so thoroughly had these ideas permeated the culture. Responses were soon forthcoming from a variety of sources, and, indeed, for a time there seemed to be no other subject but Freud and Feminism. The mass media discovered the controversy as did more serious observers; bibliographies abounded, texts proliferated, responses and rejoinders multiplied. Freud was often defended altogether as a hero of culture, an heir to the Enlightenment, a *conquistador*, or attacked unsparingly as a product and a relic of nineteenth-century Vienna, an agent of bourgeois capitalism, an apologist for patriarchy. Much of the discussion has been belligerent and does not necessarily reveal great familiarity with the Freudian texts. (For example, the phrase "anatomy is destiny," which Freud borrowed from Napoleon, has become a shorthand equivalent of all that the feminists oppose in Freud. What has escaped notice is that Freud used the phrase to comment not about the female sexual organs, but about the proximity in human beings, as in animals, male and female, of the erotic and the excremental!) Equally striking has been the insensitivity of the determined Freudian defenders who have refused to be concerned with the political and social uses of the Freudian position. It is easy to see that if psychoanalysis made assertions about the psychical consequences of *racial* differences, or ethnic or national differences, the attention of more than a few people would have been dramatically aroused.[3]

Was there—or is there—really a Freudian "position" about women's place in society and female sexuality, and can the word "psychoanalysis" be conveniently used to refer to it? Freud did not write much on the subject—really very few essays compared with his prolific commentary on other matters—but the Freudians who followed have elucidated and annotated the few texts intensively. The variations and deviations and dissensions within psychoanalysis are too numerous to record, but those familiar with the phenomenon generally know what is involved: infantile sexual history and the operations of the unconscious mind, expressed in dreams and free associations. Freudian analysts have also been associated with certain sentiments about women and femininity, the most prominent of which is surely the hypothesis of the female castration complex, and the entire psychology resulting from it. It is not merely a descriptive psychology but a normative ethics: The data of women's sexual and social lives gathered in the 1890's and early 1900's have appeared in these formulations as enduring, immutable, and both anatomically determined as well as morally desirable. Implicit in the Freudian position has been an identification of the normal with male patterns of development, so that the

[3] The furor over Herrenstein, Jensen, Shockley, and their ideas on genetics is a case in point.

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anatomical difference became an inferiority, the dissimilar libidinal process became a mystery, the lack of symmetry in sexuality was endowed with an invidious valuation, and the biological difference was ignored. Anyone who believes this is merely feminist paranoia probably has not taken the trouble to read with care the major Freudian essays on the subject.

Serious examination of these issues has proceeded slowly in the past forty years, perhaps because those with the requisite knowledge of psychoanalytic theory have been reluctant to open fully this Pandora's box, while those with passionate interest in the problem have not thought through the implications of their position. In the meantime, feminism has grown into a significant force, along with a host of social and economic and demographic transformations in the society, while the relevance of psychoanalysis has diminished greatly. One of the recent efforts to examine psychoanalytic ideas about women[4] seems suffused with the sense that those ideas may not matter so much in life as they might in the profession itself, and that in fact the whole issue has been superseded, and defused as well. Certain of the important texts, such as Freud's essays of 1925, 1931, and 1933 are included in the collection, and also essays by Karen Horney, Karl Abraham, Helene Deutsch, Marie Bonaparte, and Erik H. Erikson, each one paired with a "response" by writers such as Juliet Mitchell, Elizabeth Janeway, Margaret Mead, Robert Coles, and Erikson himself. Juliet Mitchell's response to Freud's "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" argues that feminine sexual development is in fact as asymmetrical as Freudian theory asserts, but she sees this as an expression of sexual development under patriarchy. More sophisticated and knowledgeable than Kate Millett, whose name is associated with the attack on patriarchy, Ms. Mitchell then sees the problem of the Oedipus complex as the crux of patriarchy's transmission of its structure and values, requiring the female castration complex as the agency of patriarchy's socialization of women. She would correct the usual feminist analysis of women in patriarchal society by substituting the idea of the power of the fathers for the more familiar concept of male oppression. Mitchell and the psychoanalyst Joel Kovel (his "dialogue" is with Karl Abraham's famous essay) view the psychology of the female castration complex and the psychology *of the theory of it* in their relation to patriarchy's self-sustaining ideology. Elizabeth Janeway is preoccupied with Freud's own curious manner of discussing female sexuality as if castration had in fact been perpetrated on them, a verbal infelicity which Mrs. Janeway analyses for the underlying recognition of women's social inferiority and the social deprivation that seems to be implied in it. Although the question of androcentric or phallocentric bias was an important subject for discussion among psychoanalysts during the Twenties, it was submerged for many years as psychoanalysis developed its normative positions. Recently, however, the matter has come up again, in Mitchell and Kovel in this volume, for instance, and in one of the important papers of the period, Karen Horney's 1926 "The Flight

[4] WOMEN AND ANALYSIS. Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity, edited by *Jean Strouse*. Grossman/Viking. $12.50.

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From Womanhood," to which the psychoanalyst Robert Coles responds with a thoughtful memoir of Karen Horney, in which he observes how self-evident now are those arguments which, thirty-five years ago, earned her the anathema of the orthodox Freudians.

What would have been the result had Freud's essay of 1925 taken as its subject some psychical consequences of the *biological* distinction between the sexes? Erik H. Erikson's well-known essay of 1968, "Womanhood and the Inner Space," engaged that interesting subject indirectly, and it is reprinted here with his own enormously interesting response. He assays the notoriety attending the essay (in which he proposed that the psychic awareness of the potentiality for motherhood exerted important influences on the development of female sexuality and of personality, processes not adequately dealt with by the early theories of the female castration complex). Margaret Mead, too, seems to be responding to a similar intuition, as she documents her surprise that Freud, whom she had not re-read in thirty years, was exactly as culture-bound as the militant feminists assert him to be. Her work with primitive peoples and in more advanced societies has made her sensitive to the longitudinal significance of the biological program and the sexual accompaniment in the complex network of culture. Like Erikson, she is profoundly impressed with what has been ignored by the theory of the castration complex.

The essays by Emma Jung, Clara Thompson, Helene Deutsch, and Marie Bonaparte are less interesting, and the commentaries on them less challenging, except for Ethel Person's remarks in response to Marie Bonaparte's essay of 1934 on passivity, masochism, and femininity. Dr. Person's theoretical work on the pre-Oedipal phase differs from earlier theories about instinctual sources for masochism, and her work on the origins of gender differentiation supplement the theoretical discussion. Both this response, and the closing essay by another psychoanalyst, Robert J. Stoller, raise important questions about the sources and development of gender identity in relation to Freudian theories about feminine development. This has become a most absorbing study, because gender identity is established in the very early days of childhood and precedes the major psychological patterns noted by Freud. In the work of John Money of Johns Hopkins, and others, it is linked with other psychological developments such as those of perception and cognitive discrimination.

Juliet Mitchell is a British feminist and socialist whose long book, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*,[5] expands some of the ideas sketched in her earlier work. Her argument is complex: it begins with a desire to clarify psychoanalytic theory in order to serve the causes of feminism and socialism more effectively. This clearly requires not merely an examination of Freud's theoretical formulations on feminine sexual psychology which feminists have found so unacceptable, but a thorough discussion of the psychoanalytic theory of the Oedipus complex and its place in culture, and of the development of theories about the unconscious, narcissism, passivity, activity, masculinity, femininity, pre-Oedipal development, and so forth. The theories of Wilhelm Reich, Laing, and Jung, which many

[5] Pantheon. $8.95.

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feminists and egalitarians have adopted as more attractive ideologically are believed by Ms. Mitchell to be fundamentally useless for feminist purposes because they fail to account for the importance of the unconscious in mental life, or they identify the psychology of the Oedipus complex and the capitalist family too closely. In her own view, psychoanalytic theory is an accurate analysis of patriarchal culture, and its individual sub-theories are similarly accurate in accounting for the psychological matrices of culture. Unlike most feminists, she is quite able to accept the theory of the castration complex, regarding it in fact as the proof of patriarchy's oppression of women. On other issues which have alienated not only feminists but various interested observers, Ms. Mitchell justifies the Freudian theory as internally consistent in the representation of the psychology of this bourgeois capitalist form of patriarchy, but without accepting its own normative justifications.

Some of the theoretical pitfalls in feminist ideology are avoided by this clear distinction between the descriptive and the normative. Perhaps only a British writer could show so little involvement in the pervasive moralistic imperatives of psychoanalysis that have swamped American culture! Ms. Mitchell is thus able to point to the stumbling over two cornerstones of psychoanalysis, the theories of infantile sexuality and of the unconscious; obviously, the excessive rationalism of recent feminist argument exhibits this, but so too, and more significantly, do the ostensibly liberating doctrines of R. D. Laing and Reich—asserting, respectively, the schizophrenia of everything and the politicization of everything. Although they provide appealing documentation of patriarchal oppression, their hypotheses are unable to offer any theoretical possibility of transforming the culture in which that oppression takes place. The theory of the unconscious requires that it be unconscious, and thus its contents cannot be identified with the self-protective ideology of the nuclear family. The theory of infantile sexuality requires that it be repressed by the developing mental organization and thus not accessible to ideological justification.

Feminist discussion of Freud has often ritualistically acknowledged his ostensible importance but refused to accept specific formulations. Thus, to all appearances, there is in the writings of feminists a denial of the alleged contents and dynamics of the unconscious and its residue of infantile ideas, but no alternative theory of any other unconscious ideas and their means of formation. Or, it is asserted that theories of the female castration complex are not actually unconscious ideas, nor infantile ideas, but instead are realistic accounts of social oppression. The question then remains, if these are not unconscious ideas, are there any at all, and if so what would they be?[6]

Feminists have often been drawn toward theories of pre-historical matriarchal societies, theories of biological dualism, and other psychological and mythological material. For recent feminists, the *mutter-recht* theories have had the great disadvantage of reinforcing primitive maternal preoccupations and identities, as against vocations, freedom, and self-realization, thus apparently not offering much guidance or assistance in

[6] As long ago as 1956, I commented on this in THE HUDSON REVIEW (Vol. IX, No. 2), "Feminism Reconsidered."

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the contemporary struggle. Ms. Mitchell gives little credence to this emphasis because her interest lies primarily in patriarchal oppression, not in theories of pre-patriarchal freedom. She would oppose any resurrection of these matriarchal theories on other grounds however: the dualism implicit in them seems to give no satisfactory account of historical male dominance and thus no clue for the overthrow of patriarchy. Practically, she also would see it as a dead-end, because patriarchy *is* the reigning culture, and it is under patriarchy that infantile sexuality and the unconscious have developed their specific characteristics in relation to the rule of the fathers. Ms. Mitchell is also indifferent and theoretically opposed to concentration on the pre-Oedipal period in individual psychic development: patriarchy and the law of the father were the ostensible winners; it's as if nothing more needs to be said. The indifference perhaps echoes Freud's own distance from the pre-Oedipal phase. H.D., the American poet, who was in treatment with Freud in the Thirties, reported that he disliked intensely being treated as the mother in his patients' transferences.[7]

Ms. Mitchell, a socialist as well as a feminist, links the overthrow of capitalism with the overthrow of patriarchy, despite the obvious divergences. It would be difficult to say which of these venerable systems is the more ripe for revolution, although each embodies its own contradictions, and the very intensity of the necessary repressions cannot help but produce a revolutionary class and then a revolutionary moment. Patriarchy is older, of course, and more complex: it is maintained not simply by men against women, but by the rule of the fathers exerted on the sons, transmitted through the Oedipus complex and buttressed by the female castration complex. To reinforce this emphasis, Ms. Mitchell introduces late in her discussion the ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French anthropologist, on kinship and exogamy, linking this to the law of the fathers, and explaining the oppression of women as a function of exogamy, that is, the exchange of women by their fathers constituting the law of patriarchy expressed in the family.

What never seems exactly clear, as the rhetoric becomes more exhilarating, is why this is a revolutionary moment for patriarchy. So much of the argument has insisted on the endurance and power of the Oedipus complex and the patriarchal law in transcending the very culture they transmit—this is why Freud cannot be reduced to the culture of nineteenth-century Vienna—and surely neither the feminist restiveness of the past one hundred and fifty years, nor the complex changes in family, social structure, industrial society, and mores have eluded the inexorable transmission. In fact, Ms. Mitchell's sharpest criticism has been of the "culturalist" opposition to Freud, so it is a bit hard to follow her theoretical point here as well as her more specific revolutionary strategy. Exactly how is patriarchy to be overthrown? And especially if, as she asserts, and quotes Freud as asserting, patriarchy and civilization are somehow identical?

This is all very complex and fascinating but there is room for wonder,

[7] In her very interesting TRIBUTE TO FREUD. David R. Godine. $10.00.

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not only about the revolutionary strategy, but about the daily life. Psychoanalysis has affected all of us extensively and profoundly, has inspired us to intervene in life, to modulate and ameliorate; the inexorable processes do not occur in the same manner. In an atmosphere of liberal thought, acceptance of infantile sexuality, permissive encouragement of activities once forbidden, sexual candour, sanctioned rebellion, and diffuse authority, can the Oedipus complex develop as it is alleged to do? And what of contemporary women? They engage in vocational choice, pursuit of complex career goals, advanced training, erotic relationships, executive responsibilities, household management, mechanical skills. They own property, rear children, participate actively in political and community activities, even in the disintegrating social climate of the present day. When their children no longer need help with French or Geometry, no longer need to be driven to basketball games or dancing school or doctors' appointments, the mothers cheerfully and optimistically re-enter the labor force, engage in social welfare or further education. Other women have been in the labor force all along—over one-third of all married women, more than half of those between 34 and 54, thirty million in the United States at the last census, and, now, with the recession, perhaps three million unemployed. What is the relation between these women and Dora or Dora's mother? Where is the animosity, the disdain, the bitterness Freud thought so essential to the feminine character? These as well as countless other character traits and behavior patterns were asserted not as unconscious feelings but as real, objective, and palpable in history and experience. What is the meaning and value of these assertions?

Writing in 1933, Freud observed that a man of thirty seems youthful, ready for change and development, compared with the psychic rigidity and limitation of the woman of thirty. Today, forty-odd years later, the exact opposite would seem to be observable: the man may have essentially finished with his psychic and social development, next to the young woman who has already completed her family and is looking forward to a life full of unrealised possibilities, unrealised but not unrealisable. This has occurred without the overthrow of patriarchy or of capitalism or of civilization and yet it represents a profound revision in ostensibly immutable experience. Social intervention has transformed the "inevitable" consequences of certain psychological verities: how was it accomplished and with what energies? And, again, if the inevitable and the immutable yield to social and personal intervention, what then is being transmitted through the Oedipus complex?

The transcendent vocation, the creative life, the individual erotic life, the life of social and political service, or of witness—these flowers of advanced capitalism, even if viewed as flowers rising from the dung-heap of the patriarchal family, glowing with the phosphorescence of decay, should have withered as the inner contradictions of patriarchy exploded its structure. Somehow it does not happen, but what if it does? Do we go back to the dawn of history? Another band of brothers and sisters pursuing—what? But where is some theory of post-patriarchal life, some hypothesis about femininity and sexuality beyond the Oedipus complex, some law of life beyond the fathers?

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MAUREEN HOWARD

Vive la différence !

"WOMEN ARE HARD ON WOMEN. Women dislike women. Women—but are you not sick to death of the word?" I can assure you, that, like Virginia Woolf whose exasperated question I borrow, I am. Yet I am also willing to admit that the word has been necessarily drummed into us in recent years: no sensible woman will be so fastidious as to reject, on grounds of mere taste, the gains of what every comedy on television refers to as The Movement. I realize that gains for women's rights are partial and unresolved; in fact, I am reluctant to write anything at all about members of my sex, lest my claims, impressions really, be ill-founded or politically unsound. I will never titter again about the "chairperson" or groan over "Menstruation in Medieval Literature," delivered at the MLA— such condescension is too easy, an adolescent prop. I know that sexist attitudes lurk, like racial slurs of yore, in the idealized smile of every pretty model and around the corner in my simplest daily encounters. I don't always make light of the plumber's telephone call to "the man of the house" to impart the message he dare not entrust to "the wife." It does hurt, even when we laugh.

No matter how aloof one may choose to be publicly from the cause, some of us find ourselves drafted into a vast new sorority, and Ms. Woolf's words, in so far as her subject was women and literature, do not hold. Women, it seems to me, have been overly kind. I have met well-educated women with sophisticated literary taste who have bought off the shelf, as though they were real items, the mass-market women's books, their covers as familiar as soup labels. The "breakthrough," female fantasy and explicit sex written by a woman (as though she were a pigeon on roller skates), will seem in a few years (indeed, it seems now) to be as important as that much touted artistic innovation of the sixties—nudity on the stage. Apparently women like each other well enough to be titillated by an autobiographical touch, to honor the simplistic confessions of "one of our own." The formula of frankness (satiric or violent) is as predictable as the gravestones and weeping willows in sentimental ladies' verse of the nineteenth century.

To remind us that there is real value in the study of women's literature, Patricia Meyer Spacks has written a poised critical study, *The Female Imagination*.[1] I felt in reading her work that flush of shame I have experienced when, for example, I pick up Strindberg after a "serious" discussion of Edward Albee. The impetus behind this book was a course entitled "Women's Literature and Women's Problems" which Mrs. Spacks taught at Wellesley, so it might be regarded as part of the current scene, but there is nothing fashionable about *The Female Imagination*. Though her tone is always equable and cool, Spacks is as demanding of women in

[1] THE FEMALE IMAGINATION, by *Patricia Meyer Spacks*. Knopf. $10.00.

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general as she is of her students whose remarks on literature and life she includes as a running commentary, to guard her seminar, as it were, from becoming too formal in print. She also includes observations from her own experience, which make the book, otherwise a scholarly critical account of the dominant themes in women's writing over the past three hundred years, peculiarly open and personal. The effect is to feel a student in her class, to question her arguments, often to disagree, and to draw on one's own personal experience in ways that are usually impermissible in our response to literature. Her technique of the aside is used sparingly and helps us to see not only the continuum of thematic concern which is so important to her, but to read the book on its own terms, as an exploration based on the belief "that the experience of women has long been the same, that female likenesses are more fundamental than female difference." *The Female Imagination* is an extraordinarily personal work that elicits shockingly extra-literary feelings. In fact, Spacks finds her students evasive, hiding behind their skills in textual analysis rather than admitting that the example before them, be it George Eliot or Sylvia Plath, reflects their own problems as women.

In her opening chapter on theorists, Spacks considers the major commentators on women and literature in an essay that is graceful and incisive. Though she admires Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women*, she discerns its learned and genteel evasiveness, and in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, for all its breadth and aggressive stance, "a hidden level of female self-doubt." She dismisses Kate Millett's false authority and by implication all the doctrinaire single-minded feminists who are trapped in a rhetoric of anger, bending everything to their will. The pose of ironic self-effacement in *A Room of One's Own* is apparent to Spacks: still she finds that Virginia Woolf

> . . . apologizes directly (partly ironically, but only partly) when she begins to praise her own sex; and she apologizes constantly for the inadequacies of the women writers she considers.
>
> In particular, she apologizes for feminine anger, which she believes an emblem of feminine limitation.

Spacks is correct to insist, with some uncharacteristic anger here on her own part, that anger has often been the creative impetus for much valuable writing done by women, but I think that it is a misreading of this essay to find Virginia Woolf, in this instance, an emotional snob. *A Room of One's Own* is built, for me, partially on displays of sensibility and irony, as Spacks sees it, but more completely on reason. Virginia Woolf apologizes to no one: taking up the tools of reasonable argument—as though they were so many trucks and guns which girls were not supposed to play with—she constructs an essay that is thoroughly persuasive, as well as charming and beautifully wrought, and beats the gentlemen at their own game. Her resentment at the truly awful historical facts—Jane Austen sneaking sentences in between the more acceptable embroidery stitches, the Brontës' penny-pinching hysteria—makes her call the faults first. Spacks's real complaint seems to be that Mrs. Woolf is not sympathetic.

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On the contrary, I find that she wants so much for herself, for her audience, that it is almost unbearable. The terrible burden of our sex must be laid out for her, and for us, if we are to grasp her final message, that Shakespeare's sister

> . . . will be born. As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while.

Surely this is an evangelical passage. We have been worked over, brought to this pitch like wayward souls and Virginia Woolf asks nothing less than our full commitment.

Discussion of theory is a necessary introduction to *The Female Imagination,* but the true merit of the book lies in its descriptive analysis of the repeated themes which Patricia Meyer Spacks finds central to all of women's literature: Power and Passivity, The Adolescent as Heroine, The Artist as Woman, etc. The scope of the work, her ability to draw from a wide range of women's writings in support of her argument, is impressive. She is equally good on Mrs. Thrale and Betty McDonald, author of that old best-seller, *The Egg and I.* Spacks moves with ease from the somewhat obscure work of Mary McLane and Charlotte Perkins Gilman to the popular reference (Jean Kerr, Joan Didion) to the great novels of Austen and Eliot. *The Female Imagination* so much re-creates the feeling of a good class that I am tempted to say, like one of her girls at Wellesley, "I wish we'd spent more time on Mary McCarthy and less on Carrington." On the whole one is conscious of a fine sense of proportion. When Carrington, Mabel Dodge Luhan, or Isadora Duncan (more personalities than writers) are invoked, she uses them to good purpose. She sees, in the ludicrous prose of *My Life,* that "Isadora, trying to control Life (and Art), cannot control language because she lacks critical capacity, capacity for judgment, capacity to deal in realities."

Spacks culls the tiresome, dismissable books of Mabel Dodge Luhan to make her own excellent point: that, like many narcissistic failed women artists, Mabel Dodge could not find the energy to work. Distracted by her own self-involvement, dependent on her manipulation of others for her dubious identity, she reveals herself as an artsy bitch: "My interest in men was in discovering my effect upon them, instead of responding to their feeling for me." Spacks moves out to the generalization with skill: "Lacking genius of the sort that is publicly negotiable, the woman's experience of life is often of powerlessness. . . ." Self-indulgent, undisciplined, wilfully eccentric and supposedly "free," Mabel Dodge Luhan becomes a pathetic figure in Spacks's final assessment: "Her prose insists on her significance until the reader shares her doubt of it."

The strength of *The Female Imagination* rests necessarily upon its fine readings of several major texts: for all Spacks's charm and dexterity in pursuing themes of special feminine concern, a conscientious criticism is

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central to the book's design. Thus, in a chapter on "Power and Passivity" she examines *The Mill on the Floss* and *Daniel Deronda* at length. She interprets Maggie's rescue of Tom as uniting "masculine" action with "feminine" feeling, seeing that as the conflict at the core of the novel. A sense of power and self-fulfillment is given by George Eliot to her heroine in the end—"the need for independent action coinciding with the desire for relationship. . . . Intensity of life is Maggie's most important achievement." In Gwendolyn Harleth, the narcissistic beauty of *Daniel Deronda*, Spacks perceives the ambiguous stance of a woman torn between the desire for power over others and the desire for passivity, yearning for the discovery of a deeper self, free of roles, where she need no longer operate as a commodity or always see her own image as an external reflection in a glass. Spacks is at her best in defining for us the moral awareness of an artist like George Eliot:

> Demonstrating the power of a woman's need for dependency (even when the woman believes her need is for dominion) and the satisfactions dependency can bring, demonstrating even that dependency can be a means of moral instruction, it [*Daniel Deronda*] reveals also the inadequacy of reliance on others as the only center to a woman's life.

In her chapter "Taking Care," Spacks brings to our attention Mrs. Gaskell's neglected but true masterpiece, *Wives and Daughters*, along with Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. I admire her independence of spirit, freeing herself to use minor Brontë and Wharton, as well as the chestnuts of feminist criticism, though I do feel that some of her choices are too slight to bear her own insights. In "Adolescents as Heroines," for example, I wish that *The Bell Jar* were less scrupulously examined and that some of Sylvia Plath's poems, which contain much more resonant images on the same themes (rebellion, self-mutilation), were included. And it is not quite fair to Doris Lessing to use, in the same chapter, *Martha Quest* (a good example of harried, angry adolescence to be sure) and not indicate at this point that her story after all does go on to a hapless maturity. It seems like carping, when Spacks, along with her class of adolescents at Wellesley presumably, come to the dread conclusion:

> More vividly than older women in fiction, [adolescents] express women's anger and self-hatred and the feeling that there's no way out. Pain is the human condition, but most particularly, these books announce, the female condition. . . .
> The woman novelists who depict their plight find in it constant images of challenge aborted or safely contained: the general fate of the female challenge.

Still, there are significant omissions, especially in the "Woman as Artist" chapter. Though Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* is a sturdy selection to uphold the honor of the female artist, one successfully forged identity among so many *artistes manqués* seems rather bleak. If I may alter the syllabus, Emily Dickinson's enforced specialness, her enormous

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inner-world can be claimed as a grand act of imaginative self-creation. Willa Cather's ambitious girls would have been suitable here—Thea Kronberg of *The Song of the Lark,* or the star-struck young writer who narrates *My Mortal Enemy*. Another omission in the chapter ("Free Women") is Lillian Hellman's *Pentimento*, which must have been available in time to be considered. Hellman is less aggressive in this later work than she is in *An Unfinished Woman*, more at ease with her style and herself. *Pentimento* is, like Mary McCarthy's autobiography, carefully structured, a life controlled, that moves from an innocence to knowledge and back to an unwilling, bewildering and painful innocence again. When this chapter was first published in THE HUDSON REVIEW (Vol. XXIV, No. 4, Winter 1971-72) it contained a short discussion of Colette which I read with pleasure. Critics seem to back away from the charm of Colette, but Spacks was able to define her largeness for me—rather than just allude to the myth. I was sorry to see that Colette (I suppose because she did not write in English) was dropped from the final text.

There are times, too, when the reader cannot help but feel constrained by the schematic theme. Well-known works are oddly angled and reduced in being made instances of the female imagination. Alternative essays come to mind: in particular the piece by Geoffrey Hartman on *To the Lighthouse* which discloses so many layers of meaning, or Richard Ellmann's brilliant chapter on *Middlemarch* in *Golden Codgers* which probes more deeply into a great writer's creative genius. Still, Spacks never wants us to lose sight of her purpose: to define the psychological and social realities of a woman's estate which illuminate her creative life.

In *The Female Imagination* Patricia Meyer Spacks has engaged us in the manner of a remarkable teacher. I read the book as I have never read a work of criticism—late into the night like a satisfying mystery. And the problems of women, those personal problems brought to life by her discussion of literature, seemed all too immediate. I, too, was admonished by my father who wanted me to get on in the world, to play dumb for the boys, to give them more guile and less *Waste Land*. That was many years ago and it apparently still goes on. I can see why Spacks finds fault with her most formidable predecessor, Virginia Woolf—because she would have us see that given the disadvantages we have done beautifully. Spacks's own conclusion in *The Female Imagination* may seem obvious but it is sound: we are driven as a sex to honor our specialness. I could cite a dozen passages of Spacks's ability to synthesize, but this from "The World Outside" seems particularly elegant and wise:

> The values of society provide a screen behind which women can conduct their inner lives; they may, at best, actually supply a means for expressing the dimensions of inner reality. And inner reality is a woman's most valuable possession—whether, like Dorothea Brooke's, it constantly challenges the assumptions of the world outside or, like Clarissa Dalloway's, it uses such assumptions for its own purposes.

Spacks gives a memorable course, and her standards of performance, like Virginia Woolf's, are high.

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JOHN N. MORRIS

"The Songs Protect Us, in a Way"

I HOPE ADRIENNE RICH is as amused as she should be at finding herself inserted between Cardinal Newman and St. Paul in the listing of Norton Critical Editions (as they are pretentiously called) appended to the new volume devoted to her in that useful series.[1] One notices that she is the only American poet besides Whitman and the only twentieth-century poet of whatever nationality to have been granted entry to this select list. Norton being the publisher of her books in their trade editions, reasons for this signal honor are not far to seek; but, such low considerations to one side, this compilation by Barbara and Albert Gelpi is an interesting companion to Rich's *Poems: Selected and New, 1950-1974*.[2] The Gelpis make their own selection of her verse, some eighty-five pages of it, and add a section of Rich's ruminations on her work and other concerns as well as a number of critical essays, pro and (not very) con, of which the best seem to me to be Albert Gelpi's, Helen Vendler's and Nancy Milford's. One oddity about the book is the notes and what they seem to suggest about the intended audience, which, I take it, is chiefly undergraduate. It is perhaps helpful to learn who the Raimu mentioned in one of the poems is. But is *mene tekel*, even now, an obscure allusion? Does the word "Pullman" require a solemn gloss? Need Jonah be identified? Joan of Arc? Beethoven? *Fidel Castro?* Well, the editors teach at Stanford, so they ought to know; but it's disquieting.

The short way to review Adrienne Rich's selected poems (her selection, not the Gelpis') would be to quote a few sentences from her foreword and nod approvingly the while. "I think of these poems," she says, "not as a summing-up or even a retrospective, but as the graph of a process still going on. . . . I have chosen the [poems] that seem to me to belong, obliquely or not, most truly to that process." On the question of revisions (few and slight), she says, "I have not tried to remake the woman of twenty, or thirty, in the light of the woman of forty-five, or to revise my earlier experience and craft because I would see, and articulate, differently today." This sensible program, concerned both with continuity and change, produces a model of what a Selected Poems should be; and her statement of it points the reader on his way.

Reading this selection through from the beginning is a study in how, for Rich, "with a single purpose time has travelled/By secret currents of the undiscerned" into the discernment and publication of the unspoken life of women. Even without the assistance of those prose pieces of hers that the Gelpis print, one might have spotted the poem—"Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law"—in which Rich seizes *consciously* on this subject as her central concern, seizes it angrily at last, never now to let it go for long.

[1] ADRIENNE RICH'S POETRY, ed. *Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi* and *Albert Gelpi*. W. W. Norton. $7.95.

[2] POEMS: SELECTED AND NEW, 1950-1974, by *Adrienne Rich*. W. W. Norton. $8.50.

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A thinking woman sleeps with monsters.
The beak that grips her, she becomes. And Nature,
that sprung-lidded, still commodious
streamer-trunk of *tempora* and *mores*
gets stuffed with it all: the mildewed orange-flowers,
the female pills, the terrible breasts
of Boadicea beneath flat foxes' heads and orchids.

But this concern, as her foreword intimates, had been at work in poems of hers from the outset, as in "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers":

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers on the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

I quote this particular poem for a couple of reasons, and one of them is that it economically displays certain of the characteristic manners of her early verse, which she seems to have learned in a school conducted by, say, Richard Wilbur or (forgotten name!) Robert Hillyer. Another reason is that Rich herself has had some interesting things to say about it. "In writing this poem," she says, "composed and apparently cool as it is, I thought I was creating a portrait of an imaginary woman. But this woman suffers from the opposition of her imagination, worked out in tapestry, and her life-style. . . . It was important to me that Aunt Jennifer was a person as distinct from myself as possible—distanced by the formalism of the poem, by its objective, observant tone—even by putting the woman in a different generation." One story her selected poems tells is of the approximation of Adrienne Rich and Aunt Jennifer.

And part of that story is her abandonment of formalism, of the "objective, observant tone." "In those years," she continues, "formalism was part of the strategy—like asbestos gloves, it allowed me to handle materials I couldn't pick up barehanded." Notice that the formalism isn't said to have been—for her, then—a mistake; and it isn't blamed on "the times," on the infamous fifties. On the contrary: so far from being obstacles, the common forms are the talented beginner's best friends. (To put it no higher, consider this advantage that a couplet or a sonnet has

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over a more indeterminate structure: you can tell when it's over.) While one is attending to the mechanical difficulties that the fixed forms offer, the mind is otherwise partly off-guard and may permit one's hidden, darker subject, subversive of all that good order and discipline, entry into the poem. So it may have been with Rich early on. But pretty soon in this volume the gloves come off.

Another story unfolded here is the transformation of a good girl into a moralist. (It is of course really the same story.) For a moralist is at last what Adrienne Rich is. The later poems mean to make something happen, as in this section of the last of the previously unpublished poems:

I try to understand
He said

what will you undertake
she said

will you punish me for history
he said

what will you undertake
she said

And the source of her authority as a moralist is poetic, is in her words. From the beginning Rich has been in the business of delivering herself of truths: "To work and suffer is to be at home./All else is scenery"; "A thinking woman sleeps with monsters"; "Time is male/ and in his cups drinks to the fair"; "our needs mock our gear"; "emptiness of the mirror and/ the failure of the classics"; "the moment of change is the only poem"; "Like everybody else, we thought of ourselves as special." Such utterances have the special kind of originality that, encountered, feels like something remembered, not learned. It is important, I think, that this quality is to be discerned in the newer pieces as well as in the older ones. It's less epigrammatic now, less "classical," but the newer work, like the older, is very much a matter of style, of achieved statement that gives authority to the thing said (even when, as in "the moment of change is the only poem," the thing said is plainly untrue). For example,

I am an instrument in the shape
of a woman trying to translate pulsations
into images for the relief of the body
and the reconstruction of the mind.

This poetry of precise assertion (it's not only that, by any means) grows book by book more implacable in its claims upon us. But if we are to honor Rich as a moralist, we are also obliged to argue with her sometimes in something like moral terms. Consider the poem "Rape."

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There is a cop who is both prowler and father:
he comes from your block, grew up with your brothers,
had certain ideals.
You hardly know him in his boots and silver badge,
on horseback, one hand touching his gun.

You hardly know him but you have to get to know him:
he has access to machinery that could kill you.
He and his stallion clop like warlords among the trash,
his ideals stand in the air, a frozen cloud
from between his unsmiling lips.

And so, when the time comes, you have to turn to him,
the maniac's sperm still greasing your thighs,
your mind whirling like crazy. You have to confess
to him, you are guilty of the crime
of having been forced.

And you see his blue eyes, the blue eyes of all the family
whom you used to know, grow narrow and glisten,
his hand types out the details
and he wants them all
but the hysteria in your voice pleases him best.

You hardly know him but now he thinks he knows you:
he has taken down your worst moment
on a machine and filed it in a file.
He knows, or thinks he knows, how much you imagined;
he knows, or thinks he knows, what you secretly wanted.

He has access to the machinery that could get you put away;
and if, in the sickening light of the precinct,
and if, in the sickening light of the precinct,
your details sound like a portrait of your confessor,
will you swallow, will you deny them, will you lie your way
home?

Out of the air I somehow pick up the notion that this is well on its way to becoming a famous, or infamous, poem. Its virtues are, I guess, undeniable. But put very simply, here's one objection: it's kind of tough on the cop. And not just the cop as representative male—he's fair game. The trouble here is that this male is socially situated—and is therefore somehow felt to be *especially* odious: what else would you expect from a *cop?* This is—or can be read as—a *snobbish* poem (and it doesn't help to point out that "he grew up on your block"; he didn't grow up on Adrienne Rich's). I think I can imagine answers to such an objection. One is simply that that's how it is, the police *are* like that, what are you going to do?

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Another, and to me more satisfactory response, is a plain *so what*: "why should the wild child/ weep for the scientists," as Rich says in another poem. But I have another problem here. This poem excites, and excites in me feelings analogous to those the poem fears. This may of course be testimony to the poem's legitimate power, especially since I am led also to reprove, as a matter of judgment, those feelings as they arise in me. But I am afraid that it is the excitement that lingers. It may be that that is "just the point." But I perceive this poem as a dangerous object, a possibly poisonous substance, for whose existence Adrienne Rich, for good or ill, bears responsibility.

Perhaps I am too prim. To return to change in her book, to return to continuity, here from a single page are two passages to be going on with:

> To pull yourself up by your own roots; to eat the last meal in your old neighborhood

and

> I watched the lights on the shore I had left for a long time; each one, it seemed to me, was a light I might have lit, in the old days.

One trembles a little to think what Adrienne Rich might say of Nancy Willard's *Carpenter of the Sun*,[3] a book full of poems about flowers and vegetables and animals and her son (there are other and darker things here too, but not many of them) and with not a single hard word to say about her husband and the difficulty of being a poet and a wife.

> It's true I make books, but not often.
> Mostly I am always feeding someone. . . .
>
> *
>
> My man comes home, dreaming of sirloin.
> I ravage the house: three eggs and half a potato.
> I embalm them in amorous spices with beautiful names.
> It's true I make books, but mostly I make do.
> The chapters of hunger are filled but nothing is finished.

I'd been feeding for three days or so on the strong meat of Rich's book when I came upon this collection, and perhaps for that reason my first thoughts about it had to do with the many things it isn't—which may be summed up by saying that these are poems that do not put you to the test. And my second thought was that there's not necessarily anything wrong with that. Here is the title poem, a piece I think characteristic of the book:

> *My child goes forth to fix the sun,*
> a hammer in his hand and a pocketful of nails.
> Nobody else has noticed the crack.

[3] CARPENTER OF THE SUN, by *Nancy Willard*. Liveright. $6.95.

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Twilight breaks on the kitchen floor.
His hands clip and hammer the air.
He pulls something out,

something small, like a bad tooth,
and he puts something back,
and the kitchen is full of peace.

All this is done very quietly,
without payment or promises.

All this is done very quietly indeed, and Nancy Willard is doing it all with her skill. Since the skill is considerable, since it makes poems, it would be a piece of impertinence to tell her that it is her duty to go out and suffer more so that she might entertain us with the tally of her sorrows. Surely we are right to believe that nowadays no subject is foreign to poetry—not even good luck and decent contentment.

One of David Ignatow's mostly untitled poems in his new collection[4] begins

Said a voice to me
from the pillow
Ho Ho I am Bill Williams
Write me a poem
about yourself
Are you afraid?
Get it down
say it say it say it

Say it he does. Here, entire, is one of the results:

Once there was a woman smiled at me
from her open door. I wanted her
at once and sat through a political
meeting in her house, thinking
of just this.

He names names, too.

Cynthia Matz, with my finger in your cunt
and you sliding back and forth on it,
protesting at the late hour and tiredness
and me with kidneys straining to capacity
with piss I had no chance to release
all night, we got up from the park bench
and walked you home. . . .

[4] FACING THE TREE, by *David Ignatow*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $3.95.

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I don't suppose Cynthia Matz really needed that information, and I know I don't. (And what has this sort of thing to do with the "Bill Williams" of, say, "Asphodel, that Greeny Flower"?) But it would be wrong to suggest that such efforts, if that's the right word, are all one finds here. Here is "The Future":

> I am going to leave a child in an empty room.
> She will have my body to look down on
> at my death, when she will ask of the room
> its address, the room silent,
> stretching across the sky.
> What comfort for her, my only expectation,
> as in her infancy she climbs upon my lap?
>
> My daughter, as I recede into the past,
> I give you this
> worth more than money,
> more than a tip on the market:
> keep strong;
> prepare to live without me
> as I am prepared.

I cannot respond to most of Ignatow's work with anything like the enthusiasm some of his admirers profess to feel, but a piece like that one (and "With My Back" and five or six others here) even my academic taste can recognize as the genuine article.

There are only eleven poems in Wayne Dodd's *We Will Wear White Roses*[5] (a slightly unfortunate title) published by the Best Cellar Press (address: 118 South Boswell Avenue, Crete, Nebraska 68333), yet in this small gathering are about as many real successes as one could reasonably hope for in a book five times as long.

"Let us now consider the problem of/tenses," says Dodd at the beginning of his "Poem about the Present," and he continues, in part, as follows:

> A teenage dog leans dying
> of old age
> beside a box elder tree,
> and over half the people in America
> cannot remember World War II.
>
> What then is the duration
> of the imperfect?

I am developing an affection for that teenage dog and hope to remember him longer than I do Cynthia Matz. But the point is that "the problem of tenses," the duration of the imperfect present, is the concern of all these poems. As in this fine essay in that emerging sub-genre, The Photograph Poem, called "Taking Group Pictures":

[5] WE WILL WEAR WHITE ROSES, by *Wayne Dodd*. The Best Cellar Press. $1.50.

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And yet it is true.
All these will pass utterly
from sight, like rivers
of the Ordovician age. . . .

*

On the vast plains of Colorado
and Texas, buttes so tall they were landmarks

to thousands of drovers have disappeared,
and in brittle photographs
of Montana, children like these stare

out through faded pupils
at someone who has been dead
for almost a hundred years.

I haven't space to quote "Recovery" (perhaps the best in this pamphlet), but I commend it to the reader's attention and conclude by saying that I look forward to seeing all these poems and the others I hope Dodd has hidden away somewhere published in a more substantial form, a form substantial as the poems themselves.

Charles Wright's books seem to be coming fast now, perhaps too fast: in 1973 *Hard Freight* and here, early in 1975, *Bloodlines*.[6] I think it has to be said that *Bloodlines* is not quite so sustained a performance as *Hard Freight* was (*is*: it's permanent), and perhaps the reader new to Wright should begin with that earlier elegy upon and qualified celebration of "The infinite rectitude/ Of all that is past," that series of forward journeys backward "always into the earth." In *Bloodlines*, to be sure, much is much the same, as in the phrase "the clouds, those mansions of nothingness," which so clearly remembers "The clouds, great piles of oblivion." And I seem to recall from both *The Grave of the Right Hand* (his first book) and *Hard Freight* the largely mystifying private iconography of shoes, gloves, hats and hands that one encounters here. Indeed, not only in particular but in general, the manner here is much as before (and nothing wrong with that), a matter of making connections that are bizarre and appropriate at once.

Though I think that in *Bloodlines* Wright cares a little less than he used to do that that appropriateness be (however mysterious) immediately apparent. It seems sometimes that his devices leave us a little too much to our own. But this is quibbling. The pleasure this book affords has much to do with Wright's old clarities and graces:

There comes that moment
When what you are is what you will be
Until the end, no matter
What prayer you answer to. . . .

[6] BLOODLINES, by *Charles Wright*. Wesleyan. $6.00.

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*

You go where the landshed takes you,
One word at a time, still
Counting your money, wearing impermanent clothes.

That passage is from the first of a sequence of twenty poems, their collective title "Skins," that with another sequence, of fifteen, called "Tattoos," are the heart of his new book and its principal claim on our attention. I confess that I was at first put off by both sequences. As they stand there on the page, the "Tattoos" group look a lot like Berryman "Dream-songs"; and the "Skins" series not only looks like, but is, a set of loose, unrhymed, sort-of sonnets, as in Lowell's *Notebooks* or *History* or whatever it is next to be called. These appearances are appearances only: like skins, they are superficial, though maybe, like tattoos, they're intentional. But at first glance the resemblances suggested to me that here was nothing more than another mechanical effort, and a derivative one, to solve the problem that The Long Poem (or even the long*ish* poem) poses these days: if you can't build a building, try a picket fence (or a chain link fence, as in the title of a shorter sequence of Wright's that I'm not considering here). Not so—or not entirely so. But though those resemblances are chiefly external, "Tattoos" is full of dreams and visions and full, too, of autobiography and Experience, accounts of the infringements, the imprints of the world or worlds upon a self. And "Skins" makes a kind of reach after History, the history not of the autobiographical *I* of "Tattoos" but of *you*—i.e., Wright and us—who, having reached "that moment/ When what you are is what you will be," must struggle on in the face of limitation and mortality.

Among the interesting things about these poems is how reluctantly they forego the consolations of Christianity. I take it that the difficulty and the necessity of doing so are the leading concerns of the "Skins" sequence and indeed of the book at large. This may seem, in so bald a statement of it, a desperately old-fashioned business. And the conclusion reached, a submission to the natural, is something we may have heard of before. Here, from a poem outside either sequence, is what I assume to be a statement of it:

Sir you will pardon him you will wave if now he turns
To the leaf to the fire in the swamp log to the rain
The acorn of crystal at the creek's edge which prove
Nothing expect nothing and offer nothing
Desire no entrance and harbor no hope of change
Foxglove that seeks no answer nightshade that seeks no answer
Not to arrive at and be part of but to take
As the water accepts the whirlpool the earth the storm

Thus Wright comes to rest in a sort of religion of process. As I say, some of this may seem familiar (at moments in the book certain of Dylan Thomas' poems seem to be speaking again). But how many discoveries are there to be made in this department of life? In the process of attaining to this religion of process—in, say, poems 15 through 19 of "Skins," a meditation

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on the four elements—Wright secures our acquiescence in his poetic procedures. Surely that's enough.

Handsomely wrapped in a piece of a Breughel, *Hazard, the Painter*[7] is, William Meredith tells us, a "characterization," and "Resemblances between the life and character of Hazard and those of the author are not disclaimed but are much fewer than the author would like." Who can resist so engaging, so rueful a confession? Quite a few people, I imagine, most of them those who insist on having their poetry served hot from the knife; but I am not of their number. The fiction this series of poems recounts concerns an artist suffering what he calls "the Decline," unable for months or years to work usefully at the "vain, self-centered landscape" he has set himself to paint, and it treats at last of his recovery on a day of first snow, "his season."

> Though more of each day is dark,
> though he's awkward at the job,
> he squeezes paint from a tube.
> Hazard is back at work.

But the hazards of this Decline were never very dramatic, nor do the poems pretend that they were. (They are mortal hazards nevertheless, for it's much to the point throughout that Hazard is mortal.) This is a portrait of the artist in pretty cheerful middle age, who knows that there's nothing shameful about comfortable circumstances, the two cars in the garage, the money to pay "the girl who takes care/ of the children, a Yale girl without flaw," but who knows too that "Somewhere he has gotten out of touch." Thus such meditations on decay and decor as "Politics."

Everywhere Meredith's tact is busy disguising his famous skill. Consider the finish of part one of "Squire Hazard Walks":

> Near the big spruce, on the path that goes
> to the compost heap, broken members
> of a blue-jay have been assembled
> as if to determine the cause of
> a crash without survivors.
>
> Walking
> with Hazard, the cat does not observe
> them. The cat will be disassembled
> in his own time by underground technicians.
> At this point Hazard's thought turns chicken.
> It is the first warm May day, the rich
> black compost heap is full of promise.

Promise indeed! (On reflection, one cavil: shouldn't that third-from-the-last line have been rejected? It does rather put the cat among the chickens, and unnecessarily.)

Is it foolish to think that one's attention to a book of poems has been

[7] HAZARD, THE PAINTER, by *William Meredith*. Knopf. $5.00.

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sufficiently rewarded by two such lines as "Here at the seashore they use the clouds over & over/ again, like the rented animals in *Aida*"? I think not, and I've never even seen *Aida*. But how about whole poems? "Look at Me! Look at Me!" is, I think, central to the whole collection; it is very much a painter's or a poet's poem about attention—to others, to oneself, to the art—and how it assists at the creation of its objects. And that painting, which isn't and then is going well (like the book itself, of whose "snail-like progress" Meredith speaks), which is intermittently the object of *our* attention throughout—what of it? In 'Hazard's Optimism,"

> Hazard jumps, and the silk spanks
> open, and he is falling safely.
>
> This is what for two years now
> he has been painting, in a child's palette
> —not the plotted landscape that holds dim
> below him, but the human figure dangling safe,
> guyed to something silky, hanging here,
> full of half-remembered instruction
> but falling, and safe.

The "plotted landscape" is never, in these poems, to be entirely ignored. But our eye is always on "the human figure dangling safe," who knows his luck and its limits and is full of intelligent self-love.

"This beautiful book"—*Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*[8]—

> is equal or superior to Ashbery's previous masterwork, *The Double Dream of Spring*. . . . Not even in that collection did Ashbery maintain so continuous a level of what I am compelled to judge as poetic greatness. . . . No one now writing poems in the English language is likelier than Ashbery to survive the severe judgements of time. . . . He is joining that American sequence that includes Whitman, Dickinson, Stevens, and Hart Crane. The book will be a major part of our imaginative history, and is an inevitable comfort in our current darkness.

Thus Harold Bloom, solemn and tremendous as History Itself "compelled to judge." How very discouraging it sounds—another damned masterpiece! Good God! Will we never catch up? What's mainly wrong with utterances like Bloom's is their deterrent effect. I suspect that Ashbery in this book is pretty nearly as good as Bloom says he is, and I hope that the dustjacket drums and thunder won't put readers off.

I suspect it, I say, but I'm not sure. My hesitation perhaps expresses professorial cowardice in the face of something I very imperfectly understand. But to mistake, out of timidity, the mysterious for the merely obscure, the inexplicable for the un-explicatable, is like confusing fictions with lies. Ashbery's manner of saying is dark indeed, but I shall risk believing with him that "night, the reserved, the reticent, gives more than it takes."

[8] SELF-PORTRAIT IN A CONVEX MIRROR, by *John Ashbery*. Viking. $5.95.

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Sometimes, to be sure, he does not quite deserve our trust.

> Martha Hoople wanted a big "gnossienne" hydrangea
> Smelling all over of Jicky for her
> Card party: the basement couldn't
> Hold up all that wildness.
>
> The petits fours have left.
>
> Then up and spake the Major:
> The new conservatism is
> Sitting down beside you.
> Once when the bus slid out past Place Pereire
> I caught the lens-cover reflection: lilacs
> Won't make much difference it said.

Such a passage manages to be interesting once at the cost of seeming trivial ever after. But in general, though in Ashbery's poems "Familiar things seem a long way off,"

> One must bear one thing in mind.
> It isn't necessary to know what that thing is.

And in fact a good deal of "The unknowable gets to be known." How this does and doesn't happen is one of Ashbery's principal subjects, as in "No Way of Knowing."

> This stubble-field
> Of witnessings and silent lowering of the lids
> On angry screen-door moment rushing back
> To the edge of woods was always alive with its own
> Rigid binary system of inducing truths
> From starved knowledge of them. It has worked
> And will go on working. . . .
>
> *
>
> Why must you go? Why can't you
> Spend the night, here in my bed, with my arms wrapped
> tightly around you?
> Surely that would solve everything by supplying
> A theory of knowledge on a scale with the gigantic
> Bits and pieces of knowledge we have retained:
>
> An LP record of all your favorite friendships,
> Of letters from the front? Too
> Fantastic to make sense? But it made the chimes ring.
> If you listen you can hear them ringing still:
> A mood, a Stimmung, adding up to a sense of what they really were,
> All along, through the chain of lengthening days.

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That "chain of lengthening days," the chain that both binds and links, is everywhere an object of his concern. All this philosophical fuss about epistemology seems really to be about how we are to know our lives, how we are to have them. "Fear of Death" is the title of one of his poems, and like most other poets Ashbery is inward with that subject, moving from many points of departure to a consideration of it. As in this from "Grand Galop":

What precisely is it
About the time of day it is, the weather, that causes people
to note it painstakingly in their diaries
For them to read who shall come after?
Surely it is because the ray of light
Or gloom striking you this moment is hope
In all its mature, matronly form, taking all things into account
And reapportioning them according to size
So that if one can't say that this is the natural way
It should have happened, at least one can have no cause for complaint
Which is the same as having reached the end, wise
In that expectation and enhanced by its fulfillment, or the
absence of it.
But we say, it cannot come to any such end
As long as we are left around with no place to go.
And yet it has ended, and the thing we have fulfilled we have become.

*

But now we are at Cape Fear and the overland trail
Is impassable, and a dense curtain of mist hangs over the sea.

Or in "Robin Hood's Barn": though we may take the long way around it, there in the same place "The dark is waiting . . ." But it is waiting "like so many other things" and "for the time being we are free/ And meanwhile the songs/ Protect us, in a way, and the special climate."

"As in a glass or mirror of half a yard diameter, a whole room and many persons in it may be seen at once," says Dryden of one of the powers of art. So brief a notice as this one can give only the sketchiest account of Ashbery's title poem, almost 700 lines long, which is and is about a self-portrait in a convex mirror, Ashbery's and Francesco Parmigianino's, the poem, like Parmigianino's painting, being designed (in the words of an art critic, Sydney Freedberg, resident in the poem) "To impart the sense of novelty and amazement to the spectator." This deep surface is, in the technical term Ashbery justly employs, an "accumulating mirror," one that draws to itself all manner of things and returns to the world in images Ashbery's meditations on time, art and the word, the self and the other, the world and perception. I depart from this review observing of this remarkable poem that not the least of its wonders is that in Richard Howard's *Alone With America* a critical account of it had been given in print before it was written—a triumph over the ordinary course of things entirely appropriate to this brilliant contraption.

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CALVIN BEDIENT

The American Poem

As CRITICS, Hugh Kenner[1] and Karl Shapiro[2] are complementary fragments of the complete critic—that being whose mind and emotions are alike, and equally, vigorous and humble. Intellectually, Kenner is fussily busy, no one busier, but a blank where his sensibility ought to be. Before such infectious artists as Faulkner, Fitzgerald, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, his mind remains innocently white coated while his instruments fly. Not once does *A Homemade World* lapse into praise. Its only generosity is its abundant information. Like numerous other critics, Kenner is less excited by his subjects than by what he can do with them; he differs only in being able to do more. His intellect makes the literature knuckle under. There at the table is his clinical mind, gesturing expertise, and there, strapped down, is the sullen text.

Where Kenner prides himself on his knowledge, Shapiro swaggers because his heart is definitely in the right place. The right place is decolonized America, or detraditionalized verse, or the turbulent love of life. The wrong place is myth, history, and culture, and he will say it again. Nothing timid about Shapiro's passions; his essays are fisted with opinions. "A religious magazine once called me the Mort Sahl of criticism," he boasts, but, far more salty than mordant, he poses no threat to his "enemies." "The political simple-mindedness and viciousness of the great trio of Pound, Eliot and Yeats incriminate the Academy and the literary establishment which have made them the touchstones of our age"—that is his "guerrilla" style, a loud shot but a blank. Characteristically, he shirks honest analysis. When he says of *Mauberley* that "No one but T. S. Eliot, and that for his own reasons, would ever call it a good, much less a great poem," he expects no answer, he only means to "harass." His method is self-defeating. He sasses himself right out of the community of discourse.

The writers Shapiro champions have almost as little to thank him for as his "enemies," since, like a dust devil, he tours them at a dash, only to spin off into—he cannot say quite where, but America is there, and the future, and his own insatiable need for experience. His love of Whitman, William Carlos Williams, and Henry Miller is as open as the day and as indiscriminate and broad. Particular aesthetic judgments he rejects as so much finickiness: the great thing is whether a writer is for or against the new start. His favorites are reduced to his blanket approval; they embellish his cause. The essay "The True Artificer" shows like a blush that this

[1] A HOMEMADE WORLD: THE AMERICAN MODERNIST WRITERS, by *Hugh Kenner*. Alfred A. Knopf. $8.95.

[2] THE POETRY WRECK: SELECTED ESSAYS 1950-1970, by *Karl Shapiro*. Random House. $10.00.

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self-styled "anticritic" has thrilled like the next man to poetic artifice: his formulations about the craft are acute. Still, in a book ostensibly about poetry, he quotes almost none, indulging impatience with particular words in particular poems. In fact, ultimately he declares poetry un-American and goes for the wallow of prose: ". . . those poets who follow Whitman must necessarily follow Miller, even to the extent of giving up poetry in its formal sense and writing that personal apocalyptic prose which Miller does." For Shapiro (who confuses art with life) the poetic use of language is to float one to something else, and prose poetry, he believes, makes the bigger waves.

The title of *The Poetry Wreck* refers to the "cultural barbarism" of America today (or just yesterday)—the emergence of "the most inarticulate generation of college students in our history," the popularity of Rod McKuen (here dubbed MacGoon), the dominance of "elemental forms of art," "the degeneration of the literary intelligence." Yet Shapiro's hyperopic approach to poetry is itself, in a critic, even in an anticritic, "cultural barbarism," and when he calls for a poetry that would be "nonsensical, hilarious, and obscene like us, . . . marked, as we are, by cultural forgetfulness and lack of principle, . . . void of values," he takes the crowbar to more than traditional poetry. His indignation over the supposed illiteracy of college students betrays his lingering attachment to culture much as "The True Artificer" lays bare his residual respect for formal art. Though ambivalence can be almost as enabling to a critic as to an artist, Shapiro is too little on to himself to command our thought. His natural mission as an essayist—the delicate adjustment of a defense of ignorance to a defense of culture—continues to elude him.

The chief pleasure of Shapiro's essays is their prose. His style has an assured tone and a confident carriage:

> Williams is a guinea pig of modern poetry. He lends himself to the literature of the laboratory and a thousand trials and errors of criticism. He even writes a "mythic epic" like Pound and Eliot which all the culture critics seize on as proof that Williams is not a literary imbecile but one you can practically write books about. *Paterson* is a typical culture poem, the only full-dressed one Williams ever wrote but, according to the critics, the real thing, a kind of New Jersey *The Waste Land*. Williams is so innocent that he would even do that. In writing his large bad poem Williams was perhaps trying to test the validity of works like the *Cantos* and *The Waste Land,* even to compete with them.

This happy prose combines pliancy, lucidity, the fillip of forthrightness, and playful cat-like cuffs. Despite its complacency, it has no excesses of which one could tire. The words are plain and right, forceful. Typically, most of the sentences set out at once with their grammatical subject, getting down to business. The rhythms and the consistency of the language argue swift, easy selection. On the plane of style this civilized yet natural prose modestly and innocently resolves the unadmitted contradictions that make Shapiro's book a wreck of attitudes.

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Kenner's style, by contrast, is so-so—not really a style, fragrant and unitive, but an intellectual's mock-up of a style. The rhythms are infirm, the words all carapaced, none hinting at sensitive insides. Then, too, almost florid with talkativeness, Kenner's prose lacks ease. It makes points relentlessly, with a slightly raised voice, as if it were a feat to make them:

> No work of the imagination is ever abandoned. The task of mediating with a universe now merely visible, now merely *there*, was carried on: not by poets, who took to orchestrating passion, but by painters and scientists. By John Constable, then, whose theme is a drama perceptible in the experience of the eye, experience imitated by the brush; and (with less drama but much narrative about field-work) by geologists, who developed the art of natural description with the prime purpose of educating the reader's eye. . . .

and so on. The strain keeps up. Kenner is brilliant but no more a natural seer than a natural writer, not profound.

Yet while Shapiro is content to brandish knives, Kenner brings in the bacon. He has only to cease to fake significant associations ("When Horatio Alger died in 1899, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was nearly three years old"), or to wax "insightful" ("Joyce began *Ulysses* in naturalism and ended it in parody, understanding more profoundly than any of his followers that naturalism cannot end anywhere else"), and focus on a text, and you attend: the analytical motors hum and the technician's integrity is a hard white light on the page. On Marianne Moore's "grid of impediments to the overanxious voice," on the "sheer torque of insistence" in Williams' "Red Wheelbarrow," on Hemingway's cinematic technique or Faulkner's Symbolist affinities, his "world dense with specificity but difficult to specify"—on these and much else Kenner is about as enlightening as the intellect unaided by sympathy can be. True, he could demonstrate still more than he does, he is all over the place very fast, but he carries a spotlight, and it is good exercise to keep up.

Only in the uncongenial presence of Wallace Stevens—that make-believe, ratiocinative Romantic, that flippant agnostic—does Kenner lose his laboratory objectivity. He shows snobbish pique in remarking that "Stevens took the dissolution of a Christianity inculcated in Reading, Pa., for the summons to a new humanism, a life's work"—as if one could not catch the gist of Christianity from the versions inculcated in Reading. "Among propsitions," Kenner adds, Stevens "had . . . the mentality of a freshman." But among propositions Stevens was, if sometimes trying, often balletic, subtle, or droll, and freshmen and their professors should be so lucky. Finally, though Kenner is brilliant on Stevens' actual originality—for instance, his post-Impressionist arrangements of appearance—he muddles the relation of Stevens' words "to reality." Of "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" he says: "The sequence coheres by postulating a maximal separation between what is said and what is experienced." But are the two not charmingly identical? In any

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case, lines like "He rode over Connecticut/ In a glass coach" have a clear, familiar relation to "reality"—that of a metaphoric invention and intensification based on its materials and laws. Kenner almost willfully denies Stevens his measure of naturalism, of which his "arranged appearance" is a gay mutation. "This sequence of words," Kenner says of the thirteenth poem,

> no more holds up the mirror to Nature than did any of the preceding ones. But for once a correspondence of two *Gestalts*, this of words, that of natural things, can persuade us that dissonances have been dissolved. Language, it would seem, can mime a wordless world only by a kind of coincidence, as when a stain on the wallpaper resembles a face.

What is it in

> It was evening all afternoon.
> It was snowing
> And it was going to snow.
> The blackbird sat
> In the cedar-limbs

—what is it in this poem, with its wonderful, witty plainness and actuality, that calls up Kenner's lucubrations about its relation to reality? What could be more confidently denotative? It is only the critic's theory-biased language that needs to trust to luck if it wishes to coincide with its subject.

Kenner's whole book trusts to luck inasmuch as it mimics associative "composition by field" yet hopes to huddle under its title. "*The poem,*" Kenner says of that "new species of composition," the "American Poem," "*is the Gestalt of what it can assimilate,*" and so, it seems, *A Homemade World,* with its frequent meanders, is meant to be. Though it lacks a shaping thesis, two arguments lurk in its waters like hippos that now and then startle and excite one by opening their eyes and proving something other than the flow.

The mother theme is that American moderism is "homemade." Marianne Moore, Hemingway, Faulkner, Williams, Zukofsky, even Stevens—these hammer out their own rules. (The pages on Fitzgerald are not tied in—the hippo sleeps.) The argument itself is not quite "made." When Kenner raises his head from a particular text, he becomes uncertain of his ground; his practice is to hit and run. For American Modernists, he says, "the one topic of passionate concern is that Language is something arbitrary. . . ." But this formulation, suicide for writers, will not do and Kenner tries again with more success: "Styles are *elected.* Rules are made up *ad hoc.* They may be intricate. They need not be 'historical.' " The Modernist is a Dedalus, turning "his mind to unknown arts." Here the argument sinks out of sight, shy of our questions. What, we had wanted to know, distinguishes homemade American modernism from other kinds?

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And what modernism could we have been expected to get if not our "own, . . . a homemade variety"? The argument, we may feel, has been left at the level of platitude. The term "modernism" itself is blinked; if it means elected style, then Thoreau, Whitman, Poe, and Melville are also American modernists . . . and Dickens and Blake and Herbert and numerous other writers enshrined in the English "tradition" are modernists too. The term scatters like quicksilver through centuries of letters, losing its usefulness as a historical gauge.

The baby thesis is the "new species of composition," the "American Poem." Classically devised rather than Romantically ventured, assimilative "like New York City," unbounded, with "the language flattened, . . . *exhibited*"—such is our homemade poem. Kenner is perhaps as partial to it as his nature permits him to be: it suits his encyclopedic and technical turn of mind. "If Dedalus is the artist's patron," he notes, "art is no miracle but an intricate craft. . . ." Again: "Wallace Stevens was the Last Romantic, the last poet of a long era that believed in 'poetry,' something special to be intuited before the words had been found, something of which one's intuition guided the precious words." Should we infer that words in the American Poem are not precious and that they are guided by intellect alone? With his scientific terminology—grid, geometer, mathematics, torque, vector, vortex, quantum, field, *Gestalt*—Kenner seems almost eager to eliminate the Romantic element, indeed sentiency itself, from art.

The new poem is a paradox of system and openness, like a computer. Passé is the "synecdochic assumption, the assumption that the part is eloquent of the whole, . . . so that the artist is an artisan of signifying parts, and the aesthetic whole a pre-established nestling of significances." The new poet specifies "laws like a programmer's"; the rest is assimilation. What a sell to find that these "laws" are chiefly, and merely, stanzaic grids, "patterned zones." These are envisioned as dominating gushing or anxious human feeling. Yet the "patterned zones" in Marianne Moore and Williams and Stevens (as in Ammons or Plath) are simply twigs that snag the stream; the stream bears on. Of a Marianne Moore poem Kenner says that it "is a system, not an utterance, though one can trace an utterance through it." Turn this around and it will come out right. Unlike the poets, Kenner treats strategies of restraint as the very heart and goal of poetry. He is lost in the craft. He misses the poetry in the poetry. Where, outside Zukofsky, with his queer shutting out of the ordinary light of English, his lines like venetian blinds, is the new *exhibited* language? Exhibited language is, it would seem, the opposite of *felt* language. Its purpose, if it has one, is to mime a universal "order so vast it seems random," a mimicry remote from a hot human center reeking of subjective, circumscribed life. Somehow Kenner reads Williams and Marianne Moore as if they were not merely the first but exemplary exhibiters of language. Somehow the author of "But now the stark dignity/ of entrance—Still, the profound change/ has come upon them: rooted, they/ grip down and begin to awaken" is to him a flattener of language. The author of "The

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Mind is an Enchanted Thing," of "That/ Spectacular and nimble animal the fish,/ Whose scales turn aside the sun's sword with their polish," of "Ecstasy/ affords/ the occasion and expedience determines the form"—somehow she too is a flattener, an exhibiter of language. . . .

Kenner is as hit-or-miss with the new American Poem as with the themes of the homemade and the modern. Apart from Zukofsky's "A," where can we sight these new mechanical whales combing the sea for plankton? *Leaves of Grass*, *Paterson*, *Maximus*, the *Cantos*, *The Book of Nightmares*, *History*—are these assimilative poems also examples of the new species, despite the absence of rigid rules of the field and flattened language? If so, why are they ignored? If not, why are they not equally deserving of the title American Poem?

Curious that two such different critics as Kenner and Shapiro should rally around the idea of a homemade assimilative poem, but then they fill it out in contrary ways. For Shapiro it is a vehicle of unlimited appetite, of a deliciously fulsome embrace of America; for Kenner, a means of neutralizing utterance by the extended rigors of indifferent system. Both American in their belief in the artist's right to free election of subject and means, they yet represent in extreme form two opposed types of temperament, the Romantic and the Classical. Each finds in American literature a mirror of his own partial spirit—or else suspects the literature. Neither quite reflects any work of art in its wholeness—its mutual assistance as a thing felt and a thing made. Each is reluctant to perform or project the surrender to the work of art that is the moment in which the work lives.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Ithyphallic or Ithynot?

Out of the small mammals' quarters at the academic zoo comes a confusion of noises that now and then resemble, if one isn't listening too closely, human speech: "Clearly, a soberly progressive Arnoldian disloyalty to the decaying shibboleths of civilization does not square with Nietzsche's spirit."[1] Clearly, the squares at the university presses have been up to their annual mischief of rounding off the spring book lists with—what else?—the decaying shibboleths of recent dissertations on fiduciary imagery in Firbank or Massinger's peanut-clusters or American fiction since 1974 or the robust earthy bawdy zany lustiness of comedy; and logorrhea if not glossolalia reigns unconfined:

> Thus the Myrrhine-Kinesias episode, which best concretizes the play's presumptive legacy of mandatory bawdiness, offers, in nonritualistic terms, an exhilarating freedom from conventional decency. Given Kinesias' ithyphallic impetuosity and Myrrhine's nymphic tantalizations, the atmosphere created by the provocative wife and the sex-starved husband is necessarily one of outrageous impropriety. The result is that the aroma of zany, excruciating lust in this scene reduces Kinesias' references to domestic, maritally snug reunion to a thin rationalization of voluptuous facts. Kinesias, bulging with love, may look like a fertility symbol and sound off like a husband, but it is not fertility or legality that is on his frantic mind: getting laid is his overwhelming preoccupation. (Lysistrata's and Myrrhine's strategy is to exacerbate the state of his erection to such an extent that he will stumble, groin groaning, straight toward the peace table.) The frustration of the other ithyphallic Athenians and Spartans is funny for the same reason: symbols of priapic potency turn into bludgeons that farcically demolish normal inhibitions.

For clearly the grieves of acadome, not yet toilet-trained, have gone ahead and discovered yum-yum: "In his characteristic forays into monumental sex, Miller negotiates cuntland (the heartland of the anti-ideal, yet also the seedbed of giant energies) and in so doing spills over with the brazen poetry of some colossal explorer sounding the depths of a rugged, primeval paradise." The topic, though, is farce. Farce, if one judges from the tropes surrounding it, is concave and convex, viscous and seedy, grainy and chunky: for example, F. M. Cornford's book tracing Aristophanic farce back to a rugged, primeval paradise of phallic proces-

[1] COMEDY: THE IRRATIONAL VISION, by *Morton Gurewitch*. Cornell University Press. $10.00.

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sions in living color is "of seminal importance"; Wycherley's Horner has "a gay, inventive testicularity"; Christian Dietrich Grabbe, author of *Jest, Satire, Irony, and Deeper Significance* (1827), is "no farceur of the vomitous void" (if you'd been wondering); Henry Miller, "one of the great farceurs of our time," is "a great life swallower and death vomiter." Farce is, then, oral, gastric, and genital, as well as in the final analysis anal (it requires "someone capable, among other things, of funnily bashing in the fundaments of marriage"). It is, besides, political, exposing the sexual roots of politics or, conversely, the political roots of sexuality: "spitting and kicking at phony ideals and rotting [*sic*] shibboleths," Miller "devotes himself to fecund, formless anarchism"; and over in the heartland of *l'amour* and *la Révolution*, where bedroom (or seedbed) farces merely *seem* the unpretending clockwork contraptions they are, Georges Feydeau goes so far as to splatter us volcanically with the privatest secrets and secretions of the crowned heads of Europe—

> Because the Prince cannot urbanely stifle his sexual appetite (it erupts, in effect, as a powerful burlesque of all the mad lusts of European royalty), whatever vestigial awe we may feel toward exalted personages of his rank (are not princes incarnations of grace and chivalry, as well as veritable ambassadors of God?) is resoundingly punctured. Bumbling royalty is in itself a superb farcical target for psychic release, and never more than when it is exhibited in the full fever of sexual primitivism. . . .

Which comes right down to that decaying shibboleth: Society is sick, and art is therapy. Poor art, as if it doesn't have troubles enough of its own.

Social and therapeutic blather about art is always telling "us"—whoever "we" are—whether or not art is giving us our indispensable daily dose of something or other: "psychic release," or maybe "Dionysian vivacity . . . is defunct in the modern age. Jacques Barzun asserts that . . . and quilting bees. "It has been maintained that true Dionysian vivacity . . . is defunct in the modern age. Jacques Barzun asserts that . . . 'we make no provision in society for the bacchanalian part of being. We do not know how to laugh or revel.' " Barzun probably thinks that nothing short of a Constitutional amendment will do the job; but Gurewitch is cheerier though a trifle enigmatic: "It is doubtless true that the potential for Dionysian exhilaration has been to some degree sponged out of our lives by neurotic frustrations; but it is hard to imagine that we never engage in the kind of saturnalian revelry that dissolves panic . . ." (but the kind he finds it hard to imagine we never engage in is left unspecified). Ultimately, once those unimaginable saturnalian Saturday nights have taken their toll of the Barzunian hoo-hah part of being, what remains except art? and Freud himself can be dragged in with a "clear (if indirect) justification for the propagation of bacchanalian farce":

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> In *Civilization and Its Discontents* . . . Freud highlights cultural suffering and its alleviation. The arts ease the antisocial hostility in man by indirectly restoring to him elements of a lost psychic freedom. And among the arts (here I am extrapolating from Freud's ideas, not summarizing them) farce must be the perfect antagonist of the cultural superego; for farce is the art that circumvents inhibition most rebelliously and most irresponsibly. . . . By rejecting the emasculating forces of propriety and conformity, it purges the impacted cravings and poisonous resentments that debilitate the psyche. . . .

Bad artists and bad critics have no pity for the rest of us, to whom art is of not more than middling interest, and who cling unapologetically to such authentic daily comforts as propriety and conformity. "Because Freud, in his little book on the discomforts of culture, speaks of the disinhibitory role of the arts, it would in truth have been appropriate for him to declare that comic art in its most irrational form (farce) is the best single aesthetic counter-agent to man's culturally submissive conduct"—so Gurewitch says for Freud what in all decency Freud ought to have said for Gurewitch; and then, without the ghost of a suspicion that he's bringing down his whole house of 3-by-5 cards, cites in a footnote Freud's own reservation regarding the powers of art: i.e. that it affects us only as a "mild narcotic" does. Bad artists and bad critics share a thesaurus of misapprehensions, among which two of the most farcical are (1) that art has a much stronger and more lasting effect on us than a mild narcotic, and (2) that art makes the world go round even for those who never talk or write about it. But without a moment's hesitation life keeps reasserting itself against art, and even the silliest book can do very little to a reader that hasn't already been done by native stupidity.

Anyhow, *quis custodiet custodes?* Art takes no responsibility for its self-appointed keepers. "He is abnormally cognizant of the world's revilement; hence he is maniacally intent on the malicious thrills of retortion": anybody who writes such a sentence as a matter of course, indeed with an obvious flourish of pride, needs a lot more help than his readers, some of whom very likely at least speak English; and art—the stone mountain of good, indifferent, and terrible books he has spent his professional life enthusiastically hacking away at—hasn't bothered to give him the time of day.

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Report

ROBERT NYE

Letter from England: Jones and Sisson

ELIOT, WRITING THE SECOND of the *Four Quartets*, noticed that he had just spent twenty years trying to learn to use words:

> and every attempt
> Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
> Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
> For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
> One is no longer disposed to say it.

Eliot is speaking here of words as a means of communication at once precise and intractable, capable of putting the process of thought and feeling to an extreme test of authenticity but reluctant to do so. He is also defining the despair experienced sooner or later by all who use words with a sense of the life in them—a life which can go dead. He goes on to speak for instance of each attempt to write a poem as "a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate/ With shabby equipment always deteriorating/ In the general mess of imprecision of feeling." This is not modesty. Eliot is talking about the insufficiency of poets and poetry. His argument implies some necessary incompetence in the human condition, though not perhaps in the structure of language. I think he picked up the notion from the English philosopher and poet T. E. Hulme, killed in the First World War. Hulme, quite outrageously, argued from discontinuity in our perception of the world and difficulty in the process of expressing it, to something approaching a twentieth-century restatement of the doctrine of Original Sin.

To write about English poetry in the last twelve months is to think of two other poets of possibly major stature, one of whom died in this period, while the other, at the age of sixty, published his collected poems. These two poets, for all their differences of style and temperament, seem to me to have enacted in their writings much of the fundamental concern with the problem of language outlined above. Like Eliot's, and like Hulme's, their work, considered separately or together, might cause the most respectably and cautiously agnostic reader to stray into wonderings if there could yet be a use for the word God, since our wrestling for verbal expression can be described at best as a wrestling to understand the substance of the matter which it is intended to express. To speak in this manner is *not* to assume that there is some twentieth-century problem of language which has to be perceived as a crisis of Christianity. I know that much modernist theology does make this assumption—but it seems to me that theologians who

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speak of a crisis in Christianity are in danger of forgetting that the one on which Christians do best to try and concentrate occurred 1975 years ago. Thinking about the problem of language in relation to the question of a right use of the word God should not take you away from thinking about the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. On the contrary, such thinking could consider the possibility that those events can be understood as acts of perfect communication between man and God. If you accept that, you might then be driven to consider the further possibility that either God has provided or man has invented some means, linguistic or otherwise, by which you can witness and participate in those events other than by an effort of the individual historical imagination. Such a means is indicated in the work of the two English poets I want to talk about—David Jones and C. H. Sisson.

David Jones, who died on the eve of All Saints Day last, at the age of 79, was a writer and artist who reflected in his work a sense of the relatedness of art and sacrament. It was his ability to make his mind move in a physically actual and supra-historical "present"—in which twentieth-century Welshmen and Cockneys march side by side with the men who went to Catraeth in *Y Gododdin*—it was this that gave his verse its character. By referring to the soldiers I refer of course to his book *In Parenthesis*,[1] which on one level remains as good a book as any to have come out of the First World War. Yet it is either more than that, or David Jones's life-work means nothing. For *In Parenthesis*, like its more ambitious successor, *The Anathemata,* resorts for its meaning to the central act of the Christian faith—the sacrament of the Holy Mass—as an *anamnesis*, a recalling or re-presenting of an event in the past "so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects." Jones wrote a number of critical essays as well as *In Parenthesis* and *The Anathemata*. These essays return again and again to the conviction that man is of his essential nature a poet, since he is "one who makes things that are signs of something." The particular verbal and manual act which is the consecration of bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Christ he saw as the supreme making not just of human sign, but divine Signature. The Mass re-presents sacramentally that which it commemorates intellectually. It is also the drama of our redemption in Christ's death and resurrection, than which nothing could well be more immediate. It is "the divine banquet" which brings Christ and the Christian face to face, with Christ's glory made tolerable by the veils of bread and wine. David Jones's clearest statement of this comes at the beginning of *The Anathemata:*

> We already and first of all discern him making this thing other. His groping syntax, if we attend, already shapes:
> ADSCRIPTAM, RATAM, RATIONABILEM . . . and by pre-application and for *them,* under modes and patterns together theirs, the holy and venerable hands lift up an efficacious sign.

[1] *In Parenthesis* (Faber, 1937; paperback edition with a note of introduction by T. S. Eliot, 1963).

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The act being described is of course the consecration of the bread and the wine in the celebration of the Mass. To understand the significance which is being attached here to man as what Jones would call a "sacramental animal," it is as well to go back behind the poet to one of his inspirations. In the preface to *The Anathemata*, as part of a roll-call of names of those who have influenced the poem, you will find that of Dom Gregory Dix. Dix, an Anglican Benedictine monk, wrote a classic work of liturgical scholarship, the book entitled *The Shape of the Liturgy*, which not only follows the history of the Mass back to its institution at the Last Supper, but attempts to say something of its mystery also. I quote from Dix now:

> . . . the eucharist was regarded in the second century as the divinely ordered "*anamnesis*" *of the redeeming action* of our Lord. A good deal therefore turns on the word anamnesis . . . This word, which the Authorised Version translates as "Do this *in remembrance* of Me" in the New Testament accounts of the institution, is more common in Roman writers in connection with the eucharist than elsewhere in pre-Nicene times. . . It is not quite easy to represent accurately in English, words like "remembrance" or "memorial" having for us a connotation of something itself *absent*, which is only mentally recollected. But in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, *anamnesis* and the cognate verb have the sense of "recalling" or "re-presenting" before God an event in the past, so that it becomes *here and now operative by its effects*.

This passage is a key one to understanding David Jones—and especially to a reading of his major work, *The Anathemata*. In a sense, the lesser of his two books, *In Parenthesis*, is the easier to approach in that its origins are plain in the text—Jones fought in the First World War as a common soldier in the regiment which included Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, and Ford Madox Ford among its officers; when he came to transfer his recollections to the page, however much he complicated or counterpointed them in the process by reference to the seventh-century Welsh poem *Y Gododdin*, it remained clear what the work was supposed to be "about." *In Parenthesis* has a narrative structure. It deals with what happens to one Private John Ball, moving from infantry camp to France, from parade ground to front line, in some seven months between December 1915 and July 1916.

In *The Anathemata*[2] no such obvious indication is given. True, somewhere in his preface Jones suggests that the work reflects thoughts which might be taken to pass through a particular consciousness—that of someone like himself, a twentieth-century London Welshman of Protestant upbringing and Roman Catholic subscription—during the celebration of the Mass. Serious criticism of these "fragments of an attempted writing" (the description is his own) has never ignored that pointer. All the same, many readers, convinced by the writer's own diffidence, must have abandoned

[2] *The Anathemata* (Faber, 1952).

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the work in irritation, finding it private and obscure, the product of the labours of a poetic archaeologist rather than the imagination of a poet.

"The action of the Mass was meant to be the central theme," Jones says of *The Anathemata*. Well, the work can be seen to be concerned with the presenting or re-presenting of signs, not symbols. But why all this fuss about signs? Because, for Jones, the sign is hardly separable from the idea of the holy. "A sign," he says, "must be significant of something, hence of some 'reality', so of something 'good', so of something that is 'sacred'." And again he says: "I think that the notion of sign implies the sacred." This is an interesting line of thought. It has an obvious application in any considering of the Christian faith, especially when that faith is seen as something *done*, a series of signs spreading or grown from one unique sign—the Lord's Supper, Eucharist, Holy Communion, or Mass. Jones saw clearly that the Christian sacrament is as it is because natural to man, as he says, "in virtue of his being an artist." It is part of Jones's argument, and an attractive feature of his work, that such signs or sacraments are found everywhere; the sacrament which is the Mass is only the thing at its most extreme, or supreme. Nobody and nothing escapes significance in a sacramental world. Jones says:

> Some man known to the reader may indeed appear to escape from all that is commonly or vulgarly meant by the "sacramental," but no sooner does he put a rose in his buttonhole but what he is already in the trip-wire of sign, and he is deep in an entanglement of signs if he sends that rose to his sweetheart, Flo; or puts it in a vase by her portrait; and he is hopelessly and up to his neck in that entanglement of Ars, sign, sacrament should he sit down and write a poem "about" that sweetheart. Heaven knows what his poem will really be "about"; for then the "sacramental" will pile up by a positively geometrical progression. So that what was Miss Flora Smith may turn out to be Flora Dea and Venus too and the First Eve and the Second also and other and darker figures, among them no doubt Jocasta. One thing at least the psychologists make plain: there is always a recalling, a re-presenting again, anaphora, anamnesis.

Jones was not a symbol-monger. The signs, the "anathemata" which he retrieves and puts together, do not stand for something other—they contain in themselves the nature of the thing they signify. The wine is not wine symbolising Christ's blood, it *is* wine and it *is* Christ's blood, made thus at one and the same time by the priest's re-enacting of Christ's injunction at the Last Supper. Jones, as he says himself, is engaged all through *The Anathemata* in trying "to make a shape out of the very things" of which he is himself made. The anathemata themselves are the signs, "the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and the profane things that somehow are redeemed." The central anathemata are bread and wine, the signs of the Mass.

This much is clear—but what is not clear is the extent to which the per-

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sonal flotsam and jetsam of David Jones's experience can be made to bear the meaning he would attach to them by associating them with the form and action of the liturgy. The contents of his verse he describes as "matter of all sorts which, by a kind of quasi-free association, are apt to stir in my mind at any time and as often as not 'in the time of the Mass'." One can see the *wish* to write a poem which will be true to the unity of a vision—the creation of some paradigm to display the intersection of the timeless with time. However, this objectivity of intention may not be altogether achieved in practice.

To be particular, it seems to me that the most effective sections of *The Anathemata* are its fourth and fifth parts, "Redriff" and "The Lady of the Pool." "Redriff" is based upon memories of the poet's maternal grandfather, a shipwright talking of ships. "The Lady of the Pool" owes much to Joyce's Anna Livia Plurabelle in *Finnegans Wake*. It begins and ends with the cry of the lavender sellers in London streets, which meant to Jones's maternal grandmother that summer was almost gone, and it is for the most part a moving evocation of the ethos of the city. These two sections are interestingly complementary, set in the same place, employing local imagery and cockney idioms. I find them successful—but their success is curiously at odds with Jones's large design. Neither, after all, can pretend to objectivity, except perhaps the following passage from "The Lady of the Pool," where the most diverse "signs"—things culled from childhood, things culled from dogmatic theology, a Good Friday processional hymn and a nursery rhyme—are brought together in a collage which takes as its subject the crucifixion of Christ:

> On the ste'lyard on the Hill
> weighed against our man-geld
> between March and April
> when bough begins to yield
> and West-wood springs new.
> Such was his counting-house
> whose queen was in her silent parlour
> on that same hill of dolour
> about the virid month of Averil
> that the poet will call cruel.
> Such was her bread and honey
> when with his darling Body (of her body)
> he won Tartary.

That is lucid. The signs are hanging together better at this point, we might say, than they do elsewhere in the poem. But our confusion elsewhere prompts the question: What really lies behind *The Anathemata?*

A recent issue of the English magazine *Agenda*, given over to David Jones, contains some important clues in the shape of a couple of informal letters from Jones to the Welsh writer Saunders Lewis. In these the genesis

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of the work is freely discussed. It appears that in 1934, after a breakdown, Jones went to the Holy Land. "The sea-trip had done me a great deal of good," he writes, "but I was still not up to much and hardly moved out of the Holy City, but used to watch from my window which faced south, with the Mount of Olives on my left and east . . ." Not only *The Anathemata,* but four of the seven pieces in *The Sleeping Lord,*[3] published last year, the poet's final book, derive from this time. Jones confirms that "the action of the Mass was meant to be the central theme of the work," but this rooting of his words in the one place of absolute relevance to them will certainly encourage readers to return to his text with some hope of *seeing* what it is about.

The question remains whether they should not more properly *hear* it, and this raises another which I shall leave open—whether David Jones was a poet, or whether he was not more truly a prose writer of peculiar and original genius. Unshared backgrounds are one thing, and a thing which can be repaired by information—filling in the details from Gregory Dix perhaps, or from the private letters in the magazine *Agenda.* Deficiencies of rhythm are more troubling. It has to be wondered whether Jones ever quite achieved the intensity of language and the inevitability of word-movement which his high subjects demanded, and at the same time his own reiterated designation of his work as "fragments" might be considered a correct criticism of a failure to sustain the visionary impulse. As I see it, it is those sections of *The Sleeping Lord* which tell stories which may stand up best to the criticism of the passage of time. "The Dream of Private Clitus," "The Fatigue," and "The Tribune's Visitation," monologues spoken by Roman soldiers stationed in what we now know as the Holy Land, poems situated in time at that moment which made it holy, these pieces bring together the mystery attempted in *The Anathemata* and the history achieved in *In Parenthesis.* In other words, here Jones fuses his two primary experiences: of the Great War and of the Holy Land. What has to be remarked is that such experiences, such signs redeemed, are profoundly rooted in his personal life. And what is wrong with that? Only that David Jones built his art upon the necessity of objectivity, upon the notion of the work of art as something more than self-expression. In the last analysis, perhaps too much of his work is private, idiosyncratic, romantic, for it ever to sustain the claims made for it by his keenest admirers. This is especially true of his vocabulary, which can be a real hindrance—too often I feel that a long word or a foreign word is being used to put a distance between the poet and his readers. And at the same time these words hardly seem to bring Jones any nearer to his subject matter. One wants to say the best one can of David Jones, so soon after his death, but since I started this letter by using T. E. Hulme as a point of reference I have to admit that *The Anathemata* could hardly be cited in support of Hulme's other notorious dictum—that the poetry of the twentieth century would be classic and impersonal. I shall try and see in a moment

[3] *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (Faber, 1974).

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whether, in carrying out a similar design of finding a right use of the word God, the still living poet C. H. Sisson can be said to have come nearer what Hulme would have required.

Sisson and Jones have this in common: a seriousness which must be called religious. Indeed, there is no other word which will do for it, save Christian. And the work of both is profoundly Catholic Christian at that—in Jones's case, Roman Catholic, in Sisson's, Anglican. Jones and Sisson find common ground also in a phrase Simone Weil once coined, of the world being "God's language to us." It is by delight in that language, and specifically as I have suggested by returning to the central act of the Christian faith as an anamnesis, a recalling or representing of a particular event, the Crucifixion, that Jones made his verse. In effect all his work is a meditation upon the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. It is sacramental. Undoubtedly Jones is a visionary poet—comparable with Blake. If you read him in the light of his sources—the liturgy, Dix, and Maurice de la Taille in his volumes on *The Mystery of Faith*—you may arrive at the conclusion which Anthony Thwaite offered last year in his British Council pamphlet *Poetry Today*, that when all Jones's fragments are gathered they will be perceived to provide "an historical Christian counterpart to what Ezra Pound failed to achieve in the *Cantos*." I wonder. It seems to me that there are certain passages in David Jones which indicate what he might have achieved had he tried less, passages where the rhythms are not deficient, but wonderfully apt and arresting. Such passages partake of the mystery of incantation. I am thinking particularly of the boast of Dai in *In Parenthesis*. This owes much to Taliesin's boast in *The Mabinogion*, of course, but you do not have to know that to feel the force of the words, especially as read by Dylan Thomas in the recording of the work made for the BBC by Douglas Cleverdon:

> I am '62 Socrates, my feet are colder than you think
> on this
> Potidaean duck-board.
> I the adder in the little bush
> whose hibernation-end
> undid,
> unmade victorious toil:
> In ostium fluminis.

If only David Jones had brought that kind of intimation of the possibilities of speech-rhythm to his meditations upon more abstruse subject matter then I think his status as a major poet would now be unassailable. As it is, he may honourably be characterised as one who sought to show the inexpressible . . . Wittgenstein, towards the end of the *Tractatus*, admitting to "the feeling of the world as a limited whole" as "the mystical feeling," goes on to provide that phrase I've just used: "There is indeed the inexpressible," he writes. "This *shows* itself."

And so, as James Joyce would say, by however "commodious" a route,

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we are back with Eliot's wrestling with the problem of language; which, as Christians might say, is not so far removed from the central burden of the faith itself. For where can the inexpressible be said to have shown itself more coherently than in the Person of the Word, Jesus Christ? Words—linguistic philosophers tell us—are images projected beyond their human speakers. Christ—says St John—is God's Word, His image projected into time. Words, say the philosophers, are simultaneously the utterance of thought and it representative and equivalent. Christ, say the Gospels, is simultaneously God's utterance and His representative and equivalent. The problem of language might then be said to be "solved" by that grammar of assent which has been given to words by the Word. You will find the suggestion better made in C. H. Sisson's poem "The Usk," which stands near the front of his volume *In the Trojan Ditch*[4]:

> Christ is a language in which we speak to God
> And also God, so that we speak in truth;
> He in us, we in him, speaking
> To one another, to him, the City of God.

Those are the first four lines only of a poem whose drift picks up much that I have been talking about in this letter—Hulme's perception of the discontinuity in the world and our difficulty in expressing it; the central significance of the action of the Mass as what makes sense of us; but it adds also a theme which Sisson has made especially his own (although again one might trace its origins to Hulme)—namely, a scepticism regarding the persistence of consciousness in any real individual sense at all, other than through the Incarnation, in which God as it were consented once more to be broken up into man, His own image. This theme of a divine flux being all there is for us in the way of hope is recurrent in Sisson. As a theme, you can take it or leave it—I mean, belief in the message is not essential to appreciation of the verse. What any attentive reader will find difficult to leave is the rhythmic vitality of these poems:

> Nothing is in my own voice because I have not
> Any. Nothing in my own name
> Here inscribed on water, nothing but flow
> A ripple, outwards. Standing beside the Usk
> You flow like truth, river, I will get in
> Over me, through me perhaps, river let me be crystalline
> As I shall not be, shivering upon the bank.

In pursuit of this appetite to be "crystalline," thought in "The Usk" becomes so intense and rhythm so subtle that a fluid syntax of what appears to be pure intuition emerges—a skin and muscle which seems the only possible way of covering and connecting these particular bones. There is an authority to these words in this order. They fix themselves in

[4] *In the Trojan Ditch: Collected Poems & Selected Translations* (Carcanet Press, 1974).

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the head, with fluidities of expression suiting fluidities of perception, and with in many places that longed-for and necessary "crystalline" which changes the way we read the world. Donald Davie, in the course of a long and appreciative review of *In the Trojan Ditch*, was prepared this early to refer to "The Usk" as "one of the great poems of our time."

A great deal of complex material is being mastered in the process of Sisson's poetry—as much as is fed into the process of the poetry of David Jones, perhaps more. But it does not remain so private and inert. As in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the personal content is only a charge or an irritant to the poet himself. The work remains individual, but it has a voice which is the voice of more than one speaker. The complex material is given a formal and intellectual unity, and the presence of this unity is not imposed (as Jones would have seemed to be seeking to impose order through the shape of the liturgy applied upon the chaos of his own experience) but rather *found* in close attention to language and then transmitted principally in the same way—through and upon the pulses. The rhythmic variety catches some pretty elusive movements of the mind. And more is admitted below the surface of consciousness than the categories of my letter so far may have made the reader expect. Sisson's verse is a more flexible and worldly medium that Jones's. There is not so much of a divorce between the sacred and the profane. This goes with a more vivid awareness of the fact of sin. Here is a whole poem called "Human Relations":

> My mind is so evil and unjust
> I smile in deprecation when I am flattered
> But inside the palace of my smile
> Is the grovelling worm that eats its own tail
> And concealed under the threshold of my lips
> Is the trustless word that will wrong you if it can.
> Come nearer to me therefore, my friend,
> And be impressed by the truth of my explanation.
> No less, lady, take my chaste hand
> While the other imaginatively rifles your drawers.

The finest of Sisson's poems remind me a little of John Donne, in that in them a passionate nature examines the nature of its passion and finds it not irrelevant to that crucial paradox of Christianity: *And the Word was made flesh.*

Sisson, as the "selected translations" in *The Trojan Ditch* make clear, has also prepared some able versions from the Latin, those of Catullus being especially effective I think. It is interesting that the Latin poet is seen specifically and sympathetically thus:

> His mind was a clear lake in which he had swum:
> There was nothing but to await a new cloud.
> We have seen it. But Catullus did not;
> He had already hovered his thirty years

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On the edge of the Mediterranean basin.
The other, rising like a whirlwind in a remote province,
Was of a character he would have ignored.
And yet the body burnt out by lechery,
Turning to its tomb, was awaiting this,
Forerunning as surely as John the Baptist
An impossible love pincered from a human form.

The relationship of the flesh and the spirit is never ignored in Sisson's best verse. Christianity is celebrated in it as the faith which makes sense of that relation, and the poet's celebration has the advantage of rejecting and neglecting nothing. I mentioned Donne. Sisson has a poem addressed to his predecessor, in which he declares "Your cleverness is dismissed from this suit/ Bring out your genitals and your theology," and which ends, remembering that Donne was once rector of the parish church at Sevenoaks, with an invitation to Donne to

Come down and speak to the men of ability
On the Sevenoaks platform and tell them
That at your Saint Nicholas the faith
Is not exclusive in the fools it chooses
That the vain, the ambitious and the highly sexed
Are the natural prey of the incarnate Christ.

"The proof of a poem—any poem—is in its rhythm and that is why critical determination has in the end to await the unarguable perception." Thus, Sisson himself in the preface to his collected volume. I have written this letter to indicate two ways in which two recent English poets have approached the intolerable wrestle with words and meanings which Eliot, in *Four Quartets,* saw as the poet's obsession, and which I have extended to include (in its obsession with the problem of language) the difficulty of expressing our perception of the world, which difficulty Hulme related to the dogma of Original Sin, and which we may thereby see as inextricably bound up with the need to express the inexpressible, the question of a use for the word God. Poetry is to be seen in this light as itself a religious activity because it assays the "effective recalling" of an event in the past, to be "here and now operative by its effects"—though I quote Dix's words with temerity, here as elsewhere, to indicate a similarity, to improve on Wordsworth's dictum of "emotion recollected in tranquillity," and not to claim for poetry any of the significance which belongs to the Mass alone. The two poets to whom in this letter I have referred attention are both poets with the strongest claims on serious readers, on readers who have pondered Hulme's paradox, and Eliot's careful definition of the problem, and Wittgenstein's further deliberations in the *Tractatus.* David Jones and C. H. Sisson are Christian poets, poets obsessed by the realisation of the Fall of man, conscious of the crucial mattering of the Mass as "the greatest action that can be on earth" (as Newman calls it in his novel *Loss*

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and Gain) since it is the Mass which insists upon our reality as religious animals, animals who far from living by bread alone needs must live by bread and wine which have become for us the Body and Blood of Christ, a foretaste of eternity. Both of them juxtapose the classical and the Biblical in an attempt to reveal the meaning in the revealed religion which is the Christian faith. In point of seriousness of content, then, there is not much between them. It is a purpose of this letter to recommend that both are worth reading. In point of achievement, in resolving the question of *how much* is effectively recalled in each, and *how well*, it is too soon to match or measure, even if I wanted to, which I do not, for there is no reason I can see why we should not take whatever pleasure and instruction we can find from either. Yet it is part of the intention of this letter not just to leave the matter there, as it were in mid-air, but to leave the reader with the nagging ghost of a postscript—again pursuing certain ideas laid down by Hulme and developed by Eliot—that the poetry which will best survive the final decades of our century will not be a romantic poetry. It will be, in Hulme's words, classical, hard, and dry.

David Jones seems to me to have been one who saw the need for such a poetry, and who looked to the action of the Mass, the shape of the liturgy, to provide him with the necessary objectivity which his burden of private experience required, if he was ever to make sense of it. The extent to which he married his own experience to that action *in verse* is what is in question. Does the matter of his life remain inchoate and nostalgic, or is it altered—revealed in its more-than-temporal aspect—by the action of his art? The determination of that must await the unarguable perception. I am more prepared to say that the verse of C. H. Sisson carries the same serious content, returns us to the same concentration upon the Incarnation and the Crucifixion and their extension in the action of the Mass, and that in this work the rhythms (to my ear) are already more definitely and definitively proven. Sisson is quite possibly a major poet. His collected poems are full of useful attempts to learn how to use words well.

Notes on Contributors (cont.)

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Peter Redgrove is a poet, and now novelist, of unique vision and genius, whose writings have brought him wide acclaim in both Britain and America. A. Alvarez has called him a 'major poet . . . among the most serious British poets, probably the most brilliant technician of them all'; Gavin Ewart has described him as 'the most exciting British poet now active', and Philip Hobsbaum, as 'the great poet of our time', who 'wakes us up into a fresh awareness not only of the abysses of our existence, but of the ecstasies on which they depend'. • Of **Dr Faust's Sea-Spiral Spirit,** M. L. Rosenthal writes: 'Redgrove's private self comes directly into his difficult and troubling and exhilarating poems', and Irving Benig, *Library Journal,* described the book as 'filled with an energy too massive for words. A distinct volume, dotted with beautiful, curious lines.' • Redgrove's first novel, **In the Country of the Skin,** won him the coveted Guardian Fiction Prize in 1973, and was also dramatized by him for BBC Radio. Amongst the many reviews the book received, *The Times Literary Supplement* commented: 'His imagery is often surprising and beautiful . . . it has a brilliance and intensity one cannot but recommend.' • **The Terrors of Dr Treviles,** his second novel, was written in collaboration with another poet, Penelope Shuttle. Both in form and content, it is a highly original work, a joint vision of reality and magic interwoven with fine poems. • Most recently published is a selection of Redgrove's writing which has been drawn from all his published work, and includes some pieces of his dramatic prose.

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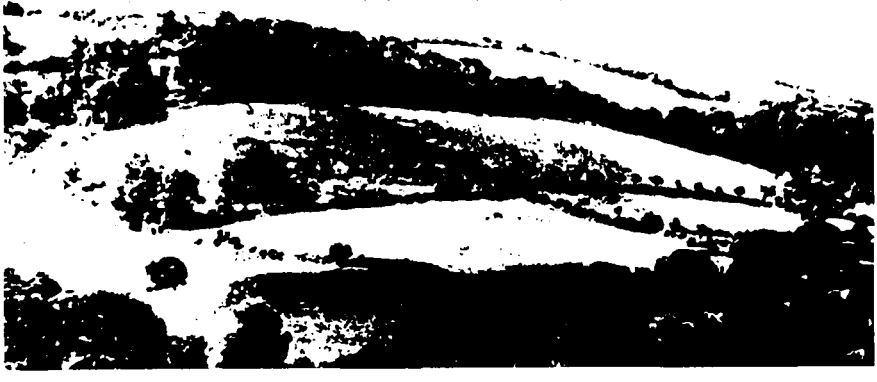

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